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*The Short Novels
of Henry James*

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The Short Novels *of* Henry James

by

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FIRST EDITION

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Preface

HENRY JAMES' literary career began with the writing of short stories, his first story ("The Story of a Year") being published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1865. He continued to write short stories throughout his life, but he was dissatisfied with the arbitrary word limit set at from six to eight thousand words for the short story by many American editors who were limited in the amount of space that could be allotted to fiction. "In that dull view," James writes in a preface, "a 'short story' was a 'short story,' and that was the end of it."¹ As a practical solution to this problem of limitation and as an artistic solution to the problem of *developing* his "little ideas" for stories, he turned to the French genre, "the ideal, the beautiful and blest *nouvelle*."² The *nouvelle*, as it was developed by Balzac, Turgenev, Maupassant, and Bourget, is a literary form longer than the short story; it has, as James suggests, "the value above all of the idea happily *developed*. . . ."³ He was excited by the *fitness* of this form for what he calls "studies on the minor scale."

Furthermore, as his artistry developed, it became better suited to a form longer than the short story: his intricate and involuted style, his exquisite sense of subtle analysis of character, his refined sense of shades and varieties of experience, his probing of states of awareness and perception, his habit of expanding a given narrative situation by elaborating its dramatic and intellectual possibilities from

different points of view—all these ran counter to the “rude prescription of brevity at any cost”⁴ for the short story. The *nouvelle*, or short novel, with its greater scope, allowed James the “space” in which to develop his idea fully and completely.

James’ short novels are significant for several reasons: 1) the short novels are a mirror of his literary development as a whole; 2) he developed artistically more rapidly in the short novel than in the long novel; 3) he sometimes used the short novel as a means of experimenting with techniques and themes that were later used more fully or elaborately in the long novels; and 4) a continuity of artistic development can be observed by a study of James’ short fiction in relation to his major works, a continuity that is overlooked by critics who concentrate their attention on the major novels. Furthermore, James’ short novels are complete works of art, interesting in and for themselves; some of James’ best and most well known fiction are short novels—*Daisy Miller*, *Washington Square*, *The Spoils of Poynton*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Beast in the Jungle*, *The Bench of Desolation*. A short novel is “minor” only in relation to a “major” novel. It is not minor in the sense of being somehow less “worthwhile,” somehow less capable of perfection, somehow less an art form.

In this study short novels from each period of James’ literary development are selected for analysis. No attempt has been made to include all the short novels James wrote for the obvious reason that he wrote so many that to analyze them all would be to extend this study unduly. All of the best and important short novels James wrote are analyzed, but this study is not limited to them. The guiding principle was to select representative works to show the continuity of James’ literary development, to explore thoroughly all aspects of James’ art, and to discover the limits of the short-novel form.

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I

The Early Period

MADAME DE MAUVES, written in the summer of 1873, is one of the earliest examples of James' use of the *nouvelle* as a literary form. In spite of a too melodramatic ending that mars the effect of the whole, James achieved a remarkable degree of technical control and maturity of style in this early work. For example, the control of theme through technique is achieved by the use of a central observer, Longmore, as an angle of revelation. This technique, which was to become typical of James' art, is first used successfully in *Madame de Mauves*.

The device of using a central observing consciousness as a narrator achieves the purposes of tightness of control over the narrative, detachment of the author from the guiding viewpoint within the narrative, and a gradual revelation of the story to the reader. This gradual revelation is, as Joseph Warren Beach has observed, "as if we were present at the painting of a picture by a distinguished artist, as if we were invited to follow the successive strokes by which this or that detail of his conception was made to bloom upon the canvas; and when the last bit of oil has been applied, he should turn to us and say 'Now you have heard Sordello's story told.'"⁵

Longmore, as the intermediate intelligence in *Madame de Mauves*, does not essentially alter the main course of the story, but to assume that Longmore is a minor character is to mistake Longmore's passiveness for detachment. Like Winterbourne in *Daisy Miller*, Longmore's dominant character trait is passivity, a reluctance to reveal himself in overt, outward action. James' young men, especially if they are Europeanized Americans, are seldom men of action; it is James' women usually who are decisive.

What is important in James' fiction is what happens inwardly rather than what happens outwardly. The passiveness of both Longmore and Winterbourne is intensified by their being placed in the role of observer. But this should not mislead us into assuming that nothing "happens" to either Longmore or Winterbourne, that they merely observe. What "happens" to them is inward; for they are intelligent observers in both senses, intelligent interpreters of the narrative and intelligent characters *inside* the narrative so that what they observe affects them and enriches them. For Winterbourne it is the realization that he has gotten "out of touch," having "lived too long in foreign parts."⁶ His having lived too long in an older tradition has dulled his sensibilities and made him too suspicious when faced with innocence. For Longmore it is the enrichment in feeling and sensibility he has gained from observing and understanding Madame de Mauves' fineness and virtue. It is at the climax an enrichment of feeling and attitude and an enlargement of view: "Something of infinite value was floating past him, and he had taken an oath not to raise a finger to stop it. It was borne by the strong current of the world's great life and not of his own small one."⁷ At the end the feeling is stronger and more definite; it is a singular feeling of awe that he experiences.

Madame de Mauves' fineness and virtue are the result of a high standard of moral conduct. However, James does

not portray good and bad social conduct in black and white. As a result of her own rarified standard of conduct, Madame de Mauves has idealized her husband, expecting of him the same code of conduct. Thus, because of her romantic view of life, the revelation of her husband's infidelity is a hard process of disillusionment. This process of disillusionment leads neither to an acceptance of the reality of the situation nor to an acceptance of her husband's repentance. Her strong moral fiber is too unbending; she chooses martyrdom and aloofness. She has her triumph when she rejects Longmore as a lover, which in the French code would be an acceptable means of retaliation. But she is American-born, possessing a purity of moral vision that is essentially incorruptible. It is her incorruptible moral vision that is in conflict with the French code of moral behavior and which refuses to compromise with any other code.

From Baron de Mauves' point of view there is the French code of conduct which is founded on a cynical attitude toward marital relations. The French code is stated and defended by the baron's sister, Madame Clairin, in an interview with Longmore. The baron's indiscretion is neither unique in his own family tradition nor in the tradition of his society. Furthermore, the baron's infidelity is a *fait accompli*, which, regardless of any moral censure, posits an inability on the part of Madame de Mauves to keep her husband's affection. What is unique from the French point of view is Madame de Mauves' unwillingness to accept the situation and make the best of it without jealousy and without visibly taking notice of it.

Madame Clairin's attitude is shown when she remarks that Madame de Mauves "has been taking the attitude of an injured woman, affecting a disgust with the world. . . . When a woman with her prettiness lets her husband wander, she deserves her fate."⁸ Madame Clairin's solution is

to bring her sister-in-law down from her high moral position by getting her to accept Longmore as a lover. Longmore, who is in love with Madame de Mauves, reluctantly agrees to Madame Clairin's plan. But Madame de Mauves does not act as her sister-in-law expects her to. It is her triumph over Madame Clairin and over her husband that with dignity and delicacy she rejects Longmore by making him understand that her motive is not a question of morality or jealousy but an ideal of conduct. It is a triumph because without compromising herself, she is able to gain Longmore's admiration and respect; without hurting Longmore, she has saved her own position.

Whatever Baron de Mauves' previous behavior, he does at the end understand and admire his wife's fineness of conduct. He falls in love with her, repenting his infidelity. But Madame de Mauves refuses to forgive his past. "He was the proudest man in France, but he had begged her on his knees to be readmitted to her favor. All in vain! She was stone, she was ice, she was outraged virtue."⁹ In despair, he commits suicide. This ironic twist at the end is an unconvincing bit of melodrama related "off-stage" by a friend of Longmore who had heard it from Madame Clairin. Though Madame de Mauves' rejection of her husband's love is in keeping with her code and with her sense of martyrdom, the suicide is an unconvincing "solution," especially since it is revealed at second-hand as a hurried bit of gossip. Yet James, in revising it almost forty years later for the New York edition of his works, saw fit to keep the ending as he had written it.

Madame de Mauves is divided into nine short chapters, each a narrative unit. Further, each chapter is a dramatic unit, for James even at this early stage of his development used the scenic method, a method he constantly relied on to achieve an indirect approach to his material. Here the scenes conform to the conventional pattern of chapter

division; later, James was to work out more complex patterns of scenic progression especially in the later novels, such as *The Awkward Age* and *What Maisie Knew*. Yet in *Madame de Mauves* the essential characteristic of the scenic method is present: the dramatic scene is carefully set and worked out as though to be acted on the stage. The climactic scene (chapter VIII) in which Euphemia rejects Longmore is the best example in the novel of the dramatic scene. After a short introductory paragraph of narration the stage is set:

The servant ushered him into the drawing-room, which was empty, with the lamp burning low. But the long windows were open, and their light curtains swaying in a soft, warm wind, and Longmore stepped out upon the terrace. There he found Madame de Mauves alone, slowly pacing up and down. She was dressed in white, very simply, and her hair was arranged, not as she usually wore it, but in a single loose coil, like that of a person unprepared for company.¹⁰

This and the following two paragraphs might be viewed as an elaborate stage direction indicating the setting and mood of the scene to be acted out. The dialogue, as in most of James' fiction, carries the burden of the meaning, emotion and dramatic movement of the scene, just as it must of necessity in a play. However, this comparison between novel and drama must not be taken in a narrow or strict sense, for each medium has its own scope and limitation. Only in *The Awkward Age* does James place practically the whole burden on the dramatic dialogue. The scene in *Madame de Mauves* is concluded by a return to the narrative method:

She liked him, she must have liked him greatly, to wish so to spare him, to go to the trouble of conceiving an ideal of conduct for him. With this sense of her friendship,—her strong friendship she had just called it,—Longmore's soul

rose with a new flight, and suddenly felt itself breathing a clear air.¹¹

Significantly, it is this narrative statement which is the thematic climax of the story.

Structurally, the first three chapters are introductory. The main characters are introduced and portrayed, the setting and atmosphere presented, and the main plot situation revealed. Longmore, a "disappointed observer" in search of new experience, is introduced to the unhappy marital situation of the de Mauves. The plot moves slowly as the background to the conflict is explored, and the main characters are described.

The chapters fall naturally into groups of three except that the final chapter is anti-climactic. In the middle group the action slowly rises as Longmore, impressed by the unhappy Euphemia, becomes more than an interested observer. He is in love with her, but Euphemia will admit of no more than strong friendship for him. But Longmore's passive nature and Euphemia's ideal of moral conduct would result in an impasse. The function of Madame Clairin in the plot is to bring the unstable situation to a crisis, out of which a decisive resolution to the problem will come. In chapter six Madame Clairin suggests that Longmore offer himself to Euphemia as a lover, an action which he would never have taken on his own. He agrees because he is in love with Euphemia and because the baron himself is favorable to the plan. He believes he would not be compromising Euphemia, at least from the French point of view.

The climax to the novel comes in chapter eight. Madame de Mauves with dignity and integrity lives up to her ideal of moral conduct by rejecting Longmore as a lover. She triumphs over her husband and Madame Clairin by not taking the easy way out as was expected of her. Her tri-

umph is complete in that she is able to retain Longmore's friendship, a deeper friendship based on an understanding of her ideal.

The final chapter is the conventional dénouement, but like the final chapter of Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* it is anti-climactic. The dignity with which Madame de Mauves handled Longmore is lacking in her spiteful treatment of her husband, who, appreciating her fineness in rejecting Longmore, falls deeply in love with her. Her refusal to forgive him and accept his love, though consistent with her disillusionment, is inconsistent with the high level of behavior she reaches with Longmore. After all, both Longmore and Baron de Mauves reach the same appreciation of her moral nature, and though the baron had actually compromised her, Longmore had attempted, however reluctantly, to do so. In despair, Baron de Mauves commits suicide, a melodramatic and unsatisfactory solution to the further problem posed by Madame de Mauves' unforgiveness. The irony of this ending is further confused by its remoteness from the actual accident. It is hastily told to Longmore by Mrs. Draper who heard it from a young Frenchman who heard it from Madame Clairin who remained prejudiced against Madame de Mauves and accused her of "killing" her husband. This obverse of the situation in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness* remains unsatisfactory and mars an otherwise satisfactory story.

The style of *Madame de Mauves* is mature and one of the best examples of the early James manner. The opening description is concise and yet suggestive:

The view from the terrace at Saint-Germain-on-Laye is immense and famous. Paris lies spread before you in dusky vastness, domed and fortified, glittering here and there through her light vapors, and girdled with her silver Seine. Behind you is a park of stately symmetry, and behind that

a forest, where you may lounge through turfy avenues and light-checked glades, and quite forget that you are within half an hour of the boulevards.¹²

The tone of this description is mature and typical of the narrative description in the novel. But it is the dialogue which gives the style of *Madame de Mauves* its effect of maturity. Effective dialogue is difficult to write, and when the dialogue is dramatic, the difficulty is greatly increased. So much depends on achieving the precise *tone* in dramatic dialogue. This is especially true in James' fiction, for James analyzes states of awareness and of sensibility and feeling rather than direct and overt emotion. This is by no means entirely true of his early works which often deal as *Madame de Mauves* does, with the direct experience of emotions. Perhaps that is why some prefer the early works of James to his later ones. But this tendency toward analysis of states of being through dramatic dialogue is evident in the early works. The conversation between Longmore and Madame Clairin and between Longmore and Madame de Mauves (chapters six and eight) uses this method to some extent. In those two scenes, as in *The Awkward Age* in which dramatic dialogue is used extensively, the dialogue is an integral part of the technique—of the dramatic scene and the indirect approach. In *Daisy Miller* the dramatic method is extended to the use of contrasting scenes to achieve a balanced composition.

Written in the winter of 1877-1878 and published in *Cornhill Magazine* that following summer, *Daisy Miller*, like its companion piece *An International Episode* (written shortly after), is constructed in two parts, each with its own setting and atmosphere. There is a practical reason for this two-part construction, the serial publication of each of

these two short novels in two issues of a magazine; however, James utilized this practical consideration to serve his artistic purpose. The two parts of each of these novels are a study in contrasting settings and social atmospheres: Vevay, the gay resort area and Rome, the somber and foreboding setting, and the contrast of Englishmen in America and Americans in England, each for the first time.

The conflict presented in both *Daisy Miller* and *An International Episode* is not basically that of America versus Europe. Such literary historians as Parrington and Van Wyck Brooks suggest that the conflict is basic to all of James' novels and ideas, and that James always preferred European values over American values whenever the two sets were in conflict. James would have been shocked by this judgment as he was puzzled by the Philadelphia critic and editor who turned down *Daisy Miller* because it was "an outrage on American girlhood."¹³ The implication is that James is somehow "un-American" because he was critical of American culture and society and because he left America and did not come back.

From this view James' "international theme" is a simple problem. However, if we examine James' actual use of the theme even in these early short novels, we find that the problem has been over-simplified to fit a particular literary historian's thesis. As in most of his novels, James as author is remarkably detached in his attitude toward the characters. In *An International Episode* the contrasting settings themselves give us the clue to the over-all point of view: the emphasis is not on which set of social values is preferable, but on the *differences* in traditions and customs between America and England. The emphasis is one of contrast, not judgment: the two Englishmen, Lord Lambeth and Percy Beaumont, are satirized for their ignorance of American customs; they (this being their first visit to America) are as much out of their depth as Bessie Alden is

in London. If Bessie Alden, as her name suggests, is satirized as a national type, the American Puritan, a theme more thoroughly explored in *The Bostonians*, the final emphasis is not satire but irony. It is ironical, not satirical, that Bessie Alden, an uninitiated innocent but yet possessed of a fine intellect and high moral consciousness inherited from her Puritan ancestors, could seem vulgar in her actions while in England because of the gulf between American and English social customs. This theme is more deeply and more tragically explored in *Daisy Miller*. The Englishmen in *An International Episode* share with the French in *Madame de Mauves* and the European Americans in *Daisy Miller* a cynical attitude toward relations between men and women, especially between European men and young American women.

Mr. Westgate, like Bessie Alden, is a national type: the American businessman, an extrovert, always busy making money. James' portrait of the American businessman in this novel and in others is essentially naive. As Yvor Winters has pointed out, there is a fundamental contradiction in James' portrait of the American businessman of the nineteenth century "robber baron" era. Like Christopher Newman in *The American*, Mr. Westgate made his money in railroads, but there is no suggestion of the economic barbarism on which the railroad fortunes were built. There is no suggestion that the way in which James' businessman made his money in any way formulated or influenced his moral or social sense. And yet the very naivety of the portrait—had James followed the implication through—has in it the seed of a fundamental truth about nineteenth century American business "ethics": the discrepancy between middle class morality and business practices which divorces business morality from private morality.

Mrs. Westgate, Bessie Alden's sister, has been initiated into English society and is not in awe of the two young

Englishmen (indeed she prefers French society for its more sophisticated manners). Both Mr. and Mrs. Westgate are already initiates into European society in contrast to Bessie Alden's lack of experience. But Bessie Alden also shares with them, and indeed has to a finer degree, a consciousness of Europe, a sense of its traditions and its past which Europeans often take for granted and which Americans are more conscious of because of the lack of tradition in America.

Thus the balance of contrast is maintained in the two-part structure of *An International Episode*. The grouping of characters in contrasting pairs and the implications of the contrasting settings (Englishmen in America and Americans in England) are the means by which the two parts are bridged and made a structural unit. In *Daisy Miller* the two parts are bridged by the narrating consciousness of Winterbourne. Winterbourne, like Longmore in *Madame de Mauves*, is a central observing consciousness, a sensitive, intelligent recording observer. He is aware, as the unsophisticated American Daisy Miller is unaware, of the social traditions and conventions of the older civilization. His interest in Daisy is sufficient to warn her against Giovanelli and against violating the social customs of Rome. His awareness of the importance of social conventions is sufficient to condemn her behavior in Rome and to give her up as lost. Yet his final understanding of Daisy Miller is the realization of her innocence. Her inexperience had made her incautious; her inexperience *and* innocence had made her a victim of the evil around her. That Winterbourne had not understood this until her death makes him realize that he has "lived too long in foreign parts."

It is true that *if* James' intention was to "defend" American girlhood against the social restrictions of European society, he would have had an excellent opportunity to satirize the bigotry of self-appointed arbiters of social *mores*,

such as Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker. But that was not James' intention; he neither satirizes nor praises the strict social conventions of European society of that day. What he does dramatically portray is what happens when an American girl, innocent of knowledge of evil as well as morally innocent, is surrounded by an atmosphere of subtle evil, which she has never experienced. The harsh social conventions which Daisy so freely and innocently violates are a recognition of the existence of that evil and not meaningless forms of tradition. What happens is that Daisy's innocence and her incautiousness lead to her ruin. Her death at the end, foreshadowed by overtones of evil and ominousness in the second part, is the tragic result of her lack of caution. [Her triumph is her innocence which Winterbourne finally comes to understand.]

Daisy Miller progresses by a series of contrasts in atmosphere, scene, and character. The two-part structure is particularly suited to this method. For example, the contrasting atmospheres of Vevay and Rome follow this pattern. Vevay during the summer months assumes "some of the characteristics of an American watering-place"¹⁴ as the American tourists take over the little town. In Geneva, as Winterbourne observes, "a young man was not at liberty to speak to a young unmarried lady except under certain rarely occurring conditions; but here at Vevay, what conditions could be better than these?"¹⁵ Geneva, though not part of the actual setting of the story, foreshadows the foreboding atmosphere of Rome. It was at Geneva that Daisy's behavior was a topic of gossip; her reputation had followed her to Vevay, for Winterbourne knew of it before he had even met her. In Vevay, Winterbourne is able to meet her and talk to her without proper introduction. But the freedom of social behavior and the flirtatious innocence which he finds so charming in Vevay, he condemns as dangerously coquettish in Rome. Thus, in Vevay he is

able to suggest accompanying her to the Chateau de Chillon even though he had just met her: "To the young man himself their little excursion was so much of an escapade—an adventure—that, even allowing for her habitual sense of freedom, he had some expectation of seeing her regard it in the same way."¹⁶ But the scene at the Colosseum in Rome near the end of the second part (as the trip to the Chateau is near the end of the first part) is in sharp contrast to the earlier scene. Being out after dark unchaperoned with a young man of questionable reputation and intentions is a much more serious violation of social conventions than a daylight excursion in the freer social atmosphere of Vevay. The risk that Daisy has taken in order to satisfy an impulse to see the Colosseum in the moonlight is more than to her reputation; she risked her life, for the danger of Roman fever is real.

The tragedy of Daisy Miller is her innocence and her incaution. Her incaution leads her to defy Mrs. Walker and to risk contracting Roman fever in the Colosseum. (Her innocence is both a fault and a virtue.) Had she been more worldly-wise, she might have been more cautious and thus saved her reputation and her life. Had she been less innocent the appearance of her behavior would have been the truth about her real character. This discrepancy between appearance and reality is the theme of *Daisy Miller*. The appearance of her behavior is all that the American colony in Geneva and Rome say it is, but their narrowness and bigotry take appearance for reality. The reality of her character, as Winterbourne discovers too late, is her innocence.

Winterbourne until the very end is taken in by the appearance of Daisy's behavior. The essential contrast in character is not between the American colony and Daisy, but between her and Winterbourne. Daisy, fresh from America with its sense of independence and greater freedom of action in social and personal behavior, is in ob-

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vious contrast to the Europeanized American colony who are more narrow and bigoted in their social customs and views than the Europeans themselves. But Daisy is also in contrast to Winterbourne, an American who has lived most of his life in Europe. He "had become dishabituated to the American tone."¹⁷ His having "lived too long in foreign parts" has made him too cautious and too conservative as Daisy's having lived too little in foreign parts has made her too incautious. His immersion in tradition and convention has made him unable to understand Daisy. Daisy defies tradition and convention because she understands too little, as Winterbourne understands too well, the social environment she finds herself in. The rules of behavior of Schenectady, where she is well known, will not work in Rome where she is unknown and where she will be judged by her outward behavior. Winterbourne, who was willing at first not to believe the worst of her, judges her harshly when she refuses to get in the carriage with Mrs. Walker and thus give up Giovanelli. It is Giovanelli who reveals to Winterbourne Daisy's real innocence: "She was the most beautiful young lady I ever saw, and the most amiable . . . and she was the most innocent."¹⁸ It is only then he realizes he has done her an injustice.

Although the plot of *Daisy Miller* is not as symmetrical in structure as the plot of *Madame de Mauves*, it is an improvement over the earlier one. Both end melodramatically, but Daisy Miller's death is more plausible, more inevitably the result of circumstances and her own character than the romantic suicide of the debonair Baron de Mauves, who at one point begged his wife to have a lover as a diversion. And, although both novels are good examples of the early yet mature Jamesian style, the style of *Daisy Miller* is an improvement over the earlier *Madame de Mauves* in its handling of atmosphere. For example, in the gay, free atmosphere of Vevay

There is a flitting hither and thither of "stylish" young girls, a rustling of muslin flounces, a rattle of dance-music in the morning hours, a sound of high-pitched voices at all times.¹⁹

But in contrast the atmosphere of Rome is somber and restricting to all but Daisy Miller. However, whereas Daisy's care-free manner seems a charming contrast to the "feudal antiquities" and "dusky traditions" of the famous Castle of Chillon near Vevay, her midnight visit to the Colosseum in Rome seems not only indiscreet but decidedly dangerous. Winterbourne is enchanted by the picturesque but romantic view of the Colosseum in the moonlight, but he also remembers "that if nocturnal meditations in the Colosseum are recommended by the poets, they are deprecated by the doctors. The historic atmosphere was there, certainly; but the historic atmosphere, scientifically considered, was no better than the villainous miasma."²⁰ But to Daisy only the picturesqueness of the view mattered even though she had been warned about the dangers of fever. All the contrast between Vevay and Rome is concentrated in that scene: Daisy's behavior in Vevay results in nothing more serious than getting herself talked about, and Winterbourne finds her charming; but in Rome her behavior results in her being rejected by Winterbourne, and finally her incautiousness leads to her death. The "cavernous shadows" of the Colosseum, the "thick gloom" of its arch-ways, and the danger of Roman fever which is at its greatest when the Colosseum is most beautiful and enchanting, are the elements by which James carefully builds up an atmosphere that is Rome. It is an atmosphere of contrasting beauty and evil, enchanting and foreboding. It leads on the one hand to the narrowness and bigotry of the American colony in Rome; and on the other hand to the inevitable doom of Daisy Miller.

In one of the prefaces to the New York edition of his works, Henry James characterized *Daisy Miller* as "being essentially and pre-eminently a *nouvelle*; a signal example in fact of that type. . . ." ²¹ *Daisy Miller* is a piece of short fiction; to say that it is a pre-eminent, signal example of the short-novel form is to ask what makes it a short novel and not a short story. Perhaps the French word, *nouvelle*, as James uses it here, is a better term for the short novel as a literary form, for we have come to think of the *short* story as being short in *length* rather than being a distinct *form* of prose fiction, and so with the *short* novel. ²²

The essential distinction between the short-story form and the short-novel form and between the short-novel form and the full-length novel is *scope* or *development*. The difference in scope between the short story and the short novel is more than a quantitative one; there is also a qualitative distinction. The larger form allows for greater freedom in development of character, action, and theme. This flexibility enables the author to achieve more subtlety of characterization, a wider scope of action and atmosphere, and a greater complexity of thematic development. Symbols and images can be explored more fully. Motivations and subtle shades and differences of experience can be more thoroughly analyzed by the author. Areas of dramatic conflict can be more fully developed and more adequately prepared for. Atmosphere and setting can be sufficiently built up to become an integral part of the structure and theme rather than a mere backdrop to the action. These qualities were noticed in the analysis of *Daisy Miller* as a short novel—for example, the contrasting settings of Vevay and Rome as an integral part of the structure and theme, the atmosphere of evil surrounding Daisy, the full portrait of Daisy seen from many angles.

All of these are *qualities* of prose fiction that we identify with the *novel* form. Yet the short novel, because of its

comparative brevity, gains something of the quality of the short-story form. It retains (comparatively speaking, in contrast to the full-length novel) the simplicity of concentration on a few characters involving one main dramatic problem. It retains (from the quality of the short-story form) the tightness and economy of structure and the unified, enclosed, single line of action. Thus, for example, the short novel, while enlarging the limited scope of characterization of the short story, retains the dramatic intensity of the short story's concentration on only a few characters and on only that portion of their lives directly related to the main situation as can be observed in *Daisy Miller*. Also, while broadening the content, it keeps the unity of focus on moments of experience rather than their diffusion into large masses of narration. And, while increasing the complexity and the levels of thematic significance, it retains the structural economy and simplicity of the short-story form. The short novel, then, as James suggests, allows for the possibility of having both economy and variety.

Washington Square was first published in serial form simultaneously in *Cornhill Magazine* (England) and in Harper's *New Monthly Magazine* in 1880. It appeared in book form the following year in England, the same year in which *The Portrait of a Lady* was published.

Washington Square, except for a short scene in Europe, is exclusively American in setting, being laid in New York in the 1850's. Few of James' novels have America as a setting, and most of those, like *The Bostonians* and *The Europeans* are, like *Washington Square*, early novels. The usual setting is European, but the concern is often (as in *Daisy Miller*) with the American (or sometimes the Englishman) in Europe. Yvor Winters sums up this "international theme" in James' novels:

. . . there is a moral sense, a sense of decency, inherent in human character at its best; that this sense of decency, being only a sense, exists precariously, and may become confused and even hysterical in a crisis; that it may be enriched and cultivated through association with certain environments; that such association may, also, be carried so far as to extinguish the moral sense. . . . This moral sense as James conceives it is essentially American or at least appears to James most clearly in American character; that it can be cultivated by association with European civilization and manners; that it may be weakened or in some other manner betrayed by an excess of such association.²³

Though this moral sense is more clearly revealed in the American heroines of the longer novels, such as Isabel Archer, Milly Theale, and Maggie Verver, it is by no means absent in the short novels. Madame de Mauves' ideal of conduct is this moral sense although it is too intense and unbending. Daisy Miller's innocence and incaution is the very lack of this moral sense. Catherine Sloper's eventual rejection of Townsend is a choice motivated by her moral sense.

Yet even in *Washington Square* the European environment is there by implication in contrast to the provincial middle-class society of New York in the mid-nineteenth century. This small, closed society is provincial in its concern with family, social visits, and dances rather than the larger aspects of life; it is American in the value it places on financial success, typified by the rising young businessman, Arthur Townsend, who is a "go-getter." Only Doctor Sloper and Morris Townsend are aware of the older traditions and values which typify for James the European environment. Yet Doctor Sloper is essentially American in his outlook, having had the Yankee shrewdness to make his medical profession profitable financially and socially.

. . . This profession in America has constantly been held in honor, and more successfully than elsewhere has put forward a claim to the epithet of "liberal." In a country in which, to play a social part, you must either earn your income or make believe that you earn it, the healing art has appeared in a high degree to combine two recognized sources of credit. It belongs to the realm of the practical, which in the United States is a great recommendation; and it is touched by the light of science—a merit appreciated in a community in which the love of knowledge has not always been accompanied by leisure and opportunity.²⁴

It is to Doctor Sloper's credit that once having achieved social prestige and financial security—though "it must be confessed that fortune had favored him, and that he had found the path to prosperity very soft to his tread"²⁵—he did not waste it on vulgar pursuits.

Morris Townsend is the opposite of his brother, Arthur. Morris desired to be a man of leisure and culture, but had not the money (which American society demanded of him) nor the interest in pursuing the earning of money (which American society had also demanded). His association with the European environment had enriched his life in experience and taste but not in financial security. Had he lived in a different culture at a different time, he might have gone far. But as it was, his appetite was whetted without the means to replenish the supply. Therefore, it was an easy step, since his moral sense was weakened, to believe he deserved the finer things in life. His scheme was to marry Catherine Sloper, the provincial and naive daughter of the wealthy Doctor Sloper, and thereby acquire the social prestige and leisure in which to enjoy things of taste. The conflict presented then through the character of Morris Townsend is not European values versus American values, but European values perverted by an unscrupulous man

caught by the necessity of providing himself with the key to American social success, money.

The basic plot conflict arises out of Doctor Sloper's opposition to Morris Townsend. However harsh and lacking in understanding as a father he may be, Doctor Sloper is a shrewd and accurate observer and judge of human character. He soon sees through Townsend's scheme, and makes clear in no uncertain terms that he will not allow Townsend to marry his daughter. But he misjudges his daughter, or rather misjudges her ability to mature. Catherine, at the outset at least, is all that her father believes of her—provincial, naive, untalented, and lacking in social charm and grace. Provincial in her outlook, she is overwhelmed by the social ease and manner of Townsend; naive in her innocence, she takes Townsend's interest in her at face value. The one quality she has, or at least develops, is courage. It is courage which love for Townsend gave her, courage to defy her father's wishes and remain true to her ideal of love. Both Sloper and Townsend are without scruples or conscience in the methods they use to attain their ends. Only Catherine, though she suffers the most, is enriched in experience and depth of understanding. Doctor Sloper, once having made his observation and judgment about Catherine and Townsend, is blind to any change. Townsend's superficiality, however clever he may be, is apparent at the end because he never really understands why Catherine will not marry him. She rejected Townsend, though she was free after her father's death to marry, for the same reason that Madame de Mauves refused to forgive her husband and accept his love. An ideal of conduct, an ideal of love, motivates both of them.

Morris Townsend is the opposite of Longmore and Winterbourne. Townsend is an extrovert and a man of action; Longmore and Winterbourne are introspective observers, passive by nature. This lack of reflection in the hero makes

Washington Square one of the least ambiguous and least intellectual of James' novels and at the same time one of the fastest moving of his narratives. Townsend, because he is superficial and unreflective, is defeated by a superior moral sense; Longmore, especially, and Winterbourne are enriched by their experiences and come to a deeper understanding of moral life. Townsend is unscrupulous, an adventurer; both Longmore and Winterbourne, though both approach compromising themselves, are almost too refined in their feelings, too scrupulous in their reactions. Townsend is the counterpart of Osmond in *The Portrait of a Lady*; Longmore and Winterbourne are the counterparts of Ralph Touchett.

The "germ" or idea for the novel came to James from an anecdote based on a real life situation. This method of utilizing anecdotes from real life as a starting-point for the creative process is used by James again and again. It is similar to the method used by Hawthorne in the notebooks, except that whereas with Hawthorne the idea was often an abstract or allegorical statement, with James it was often a situation or incident. For example, in the preface to the New York edition of *Daisy Miller*, James explains that a friend of his living in Rome in 1817 happened to mention that

. . . some simple and uninformed American lady of the previous winter, whose young daughter, a child of nature and of freedom, accompanying her from hotel to hotel, had "picked up" by the wayside, with the best conscience in the world, a good-looking Roman, of vague identity, astonished at his luck, yet (so far as might be, by the pair) all innocently, all serenely exhibited and introduced: this at least till the occurrence of some small social check, some interrupting incident, of no great gravity or dignity, and which I forget.²⁶

Out of the dramatization and logical plotting of this situation resulted *Daisy Miller*.

The anecdote that resulted in *Washington Square* is different in that it corresponds closely to the main outline of the plot. In the February 21, 1879, entry in his notebooks, James records the story told to him of a young ensign who was very handsome "but very luxurious and selfish, and without a penny to his name."²⁷ He was engaged to "a dull, plain, commonplace girl, only daughter of the Master of King's Coll., Cambridge, who had a handsome private fortune."²⁸ The girl was deeply in love with him, "and was of that slow, sober, dutiful nature that an impression once made upon her, was made for ever. Her father disapproved strongly (and justly) of the engagement and informed her that if she married young K. he would not leave her a penny of his money. It was only in her money that H. (K.) was interested. He wanted a rich wife who would enable him to live at his ease and pursue his pleasures."²⁹ The rest, in a similar vein, follows quite closely the main plot of the novel: the girl's defiance of the father and the father's threat to disinherit her, the young man's default when he sees he will not get the money, and the girl's rejection of the young man when after her father's death she is free.

Though divided into chapters, *Washington Square* is actually developed by a series of short scenes as though on stage. It is not surprising then that *Washington Square* has been adapted for the stage (entitled *The Heiress*) for its scenic method lends itself well to dramatization. Each scene corresponds to a chapter division; but, except for the first three chapters which are mainly expository and introductory and therefore predominantly narrative in method, it is the scenic method with its dramatic dialogue and limited setting which dominates. Mention has already been made

of James' use of the scenic method in *Madame de Mauves* and in *Daisy Miller*, but in *Washington Square* the use is different. First of all, in the two earlier novels only a few, important scenes are predominantly scenic in method; whereas in *Washington Square* most of them are scenic. And second, in the two early novels those scenes are more developed on the whole through the additional use of narrative devices; whereas in *Washington Square* the scenes are usually quite short, and each is made to stand by itself. The effect of numerous short scenes that shift often in focus from one group of characters to another is to make *Washington Square* seem episodic rather than a closely knit narrative. Also, the lack of a central, unifying narrator adds to the effect of looseness in structure; the point of view shifts from Doctor Sloper to Catherine Sloper and occasionally to Morris Townsend. In *Madame de Mauves* and *Daisy Miller* the point of view is kept consistent through the use of an observer, and thus the effect is more unified. However, James developed this scenic method, using it more successfully and complexly in his later novels.

The structure of *Washington Square*, like the structure of *Madame de Mauves* and *Daisy Miller*, corresponds to its serial publication in six issues of a monthly magazine. Many of James' short novels were first published in this manner, but this is not to suggest that James mechanically forced a pattern on the material in order to conform to an arbitrary number of issues. Rather, it is fundamental in James' method that he worked with "blocks" of material instead of short chapter units. This method is admirably suited to serial publication. Thus, the two-part structure of *Daisy Miller* was ideal for its publication in two issues, but basically the two parts serve the artistic purpose of contrasting the two settings of Vevay and Rome. So also the three-part structure of *Madame de Mauves*, which was published in three issues; the three parts follow the pattern of its

plot, introduction, rising action, climax and dénouement. And similarly, *Washington Square* was published in six parts corresponding to its six-part structure, five groups of six chapters and one group of five chapters (chapters twenty-five through twenty-nine).

The first part (chapters one through six) has two functions and is divided into two groups of three chapters each. The first three chapters are introductory; the mid-nineteenth-century setting and the middle class urban atmosphere are presented and explored as an integral part of the social background which helped form the personality of Doctor Sloper. Doctor Sloper's condescending attitude toward his daughter, Catherine, is evident from the beginning—an attitude that never changes. For Catherine is not what he wants her to be, clever; she is the "dull, plain, commonplace girl" of the anecdote. The second three chapters introduce the basic plot conflict: the mutual interest of Townsend and Catherine in each other, and Doctor Sloper's immediate suspicion of Townsend's real purpose—a suspicion based on the (correct) belief that Townsend must be interested in the money and not in his dull daughter.

An important narrative device is used in *Washington Square*, which James later used to great advantage in *What Maisie Knew*. This device is the confidant and go-between, Catherine's aunt, Mrs. Penniman. The device is by no means original with James, having a long tradition in English literature from Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* to Jane Austen's novels. The confidant is especially suited to the drama. Shakespeare, for example, used it extensively and variously; there is the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet* as the obvious example, but also Roderigo in *Othello* to whom Iago out of the necessity of his character must confide his hate and his evil plot, and the very absence of a confidant in *Hamlet* emphasizes Hamlet's disillusionment and distrust that can work itself out only in soliloquies.

In *What Maisie Knew* James uses the confidant, Mrs. Wix, as a supplement to the observations of the central intelligence, Maisie, who after all is a young girl caught in an adult world of conflicting emotions and in need at times to articulate what she "knew." In *Washington Square* there is no central point of view, as there is in *Madame de Mauves* and *Daisy Miller*, to interpret the attitudes of a character or characters. And since she cannot confide in her father, Catherine turns to her aunt who (her view of the world gained from romantic novels) is an eager listener and adviser. In addition Mrs. Penniman acts as a go-between (and even initiates action), a necessary function since Catherine is too reserved to act on her own, just as Madame Clairin is needed in *Madame de Mauves* to initiate the action which Longmore, because he is passive, would not take on his own.

Part two (chapters seven through twelve) moves rapidly even considering that this is one of James' swiftest moving narratives. But the advance in the action—the engagement and the supposedly impending marriage, and the active opposition of Doctor Sloper—is more apparent than real in the sense that the climax (chapter twenty-nine) grows out of the situation developed in this part. The real dramatic emphasis is on the attempt by Townsend first to "last out" Doctor Sloper's opposition and then later to extricate himself from his promise to Catherine when he realizes Sloper is not only firm in his opposition but also willing to disinherit Catherine if she should marry him.

Parts three (chapters thirteen through eighteen) and four (chapters nineteen through twenty-four) develop this "stalemate" situation, slowing down somewhat the pace of the narrative. In Part four the emphasis shifts to Catherine, who on the one hand remains steadfast in her love for Townsend, which even a trip to Europe does not shake, but who on the other hand is disturbed and impatient at

Townsend's willingness to delay and postpone their marriage. These are the seeds of doubt which foreshadow the climactic scene, for from Catherine's point of view, she is free to marry Townsend and he to marry her, money or no money.

The climax of the novel (chapter twenty-nine, ending Part five) is the realization by Catherine that Townsend intends to give her up and not marry her. Her disillusionment is the implication that her father was right about Townsend, that he was interested in the inheritance and not herself. It was not that she would want to deny him the right to inherit her father's money and house, but after all she had an income of her own, substantial enough for both of them. The disillusionment then is not the discovery that Townsend is an adventurer, but rather that he betrayed the ideal of love she had experienced in loving him and he had promised in return.

It might be well to look at this climactic scene (chapter twenty-nine) in some detail, for it is typical in many ways of the novel as a whole. The scene begins with a narrative bridge from the previous scene—Townsend's decision to break with Catherine, but his inability to tell Catherine unequivocally. Most of the chapters begin with this device of bridging the previous scene with narration before the next scene itself is begun.

The setting of this scene is the Sloper home, the setting of many of the scenes of the novel, just as a play is limited in its settings. The only characters "on stage" in this scene are Catherine and Townsend; this limitation is typical of the scenes in general in *Washington Square*, and it is typical of drama. The dialogue and the style of this scene, and the dialogue and style of *Washington Square* as a whole, is different from *Madame de Mauves* and *Daisy Miller*. It is urbane rather than cosmopolitan: a note of amused ironic detachment from the provincial society portrayed in *Wash-*

ington Square pervades the style throughout the novel. Further, the emotions and attitudes are more directly and overtly portrayed than in the earlier two novels. The characters are sharply contrasted in their traits: the shrewd, practical, cynical Doctor Sloper as against the overly romantic and overly melodramatic point of view of Mrs. Peniman; the calculating shrewdness of the adventurer, Townsend, as against the romantic idealism and innocence of Catherine. Each attitude is balanced by its opposite (or by its counterpart so that there is a sharp conflict, as in the conflict between Doctor Sloper and Morris Townsend). This balancing of opposites within the novel is further balanced by the corrective ironic detachment of the narrator who is outside the narrative.

The style of *Washington Square* runs counter to what is often identified as the Jamesian manner: the style of *Washington Square* is quite different from *The Awkward Age* and from *What Maisie Knew* even though all three make extensive use of the scenic method. James developed toward an involuted, intricate style that characterizes his later novels. But in his earlier fiction, he displayed a greater flexibility and variety in style; however, this does not mean that he became inflexibly "set" in his way of writing. The complexity of technique and purpose necessitated a more complex, involuted style in the later novels. James' habit of perfecting his style by revision was a process of qualifying and subtilizing statements rather than simplifying them. Even his early works were revised years later for the New York edition of his works, a laborious task, and one for which he was little rewarded financially but one which he undertook wholeheartedly. James did not include *Washington Square* in the New York edition, and therefore, it was not extensively revised stylistically, as, for example, *Madame de Mauves* was.

The final section of *Washington Square* (chapters thirty

through thirty-five) shifts in tone. The irony that pervades the whole remains, but the lasting effect of disillusionment on Catherine makes the irony more bitter, the mood more serious. Doctor Sloper's declaration, "It's a great pleasure to be in the right,"³⁰ is a bitter commentary on his lack of understanding and sympathy. Catherine, after a period of overt emotional suffering, achieves a measure of outward calm and resignation. But she has changed inwardly:

From her own point of view the great facts of her career were that Morris Townsend had trifled with her affection, and that her father had broken its spring. Nothing could ever alter these facts; they were always there, like her name, her age, her plain face. Nothing could ever undo the wrong or cure the pain that Morris had inflicted on her, and nothing could ever make her feel toward her father as she felt in her young years. There was something dead in her life, and her duty was to try and fill the void. Catherine recognized this duty to the utmost; she had a great disapproval of brooding and moping.³¹

Inwardly she will never again let herself open to strong emotions or intimate affections. She has neither love nor hate left in her: "I can't begin again—I can't take it up. Everything is dead and buried. It was too serious; it made a great change in my life."³² No one understands this change in her: not Doctor Sloper who unnecessarily altered his will in the fear she would take up with Townsend after he, the doctor, dies (although he was right in assuming Townsend would try again); not Catherine's aunt, Mrs. Penniman, who has kept in touch with Townsend and urges him to come back; and certainly not Townsend who does not understand, even after Catherine tells him, what he has done to her. Like Madame de Mauves, Catherine does not forgive; but unlike Madame de Mauves, she is not bitter even though she has more reason to be. There

is no one like Longmore to feel awe and wonder at her behavior, Mrs. Penniman least of all. But the idealism, the disillusionment, and the resignation of martyrdom are there in Catherine as in Madame de Mauves.

The Europeans and *Confidence* illustrate the difficulty of setting up a criterion of length for James' short novels. Both are fairly long, averaging two hundred pages in the Macmillan edition (London, 1886) and are printed in small type; *The Spoils of Poynton* (1896) is even longer. Yet all three novels fall within the scope and meaning of this study on the short novel. James himself sub-titled *The Europeans*, a sketch, and classified *The Spoils of Poynton* in a preface among his shorter fiction.

The Europeans is a relatively early novel, written in 1878 although it was not published in book form until 1886. Thus, it was written at about the same time as *Daisy Miller*. Though there is a similarity between Gertrude Wentworth and Daisy Miller in that both are charming heroines, the two novels are quite unlike in theme and tone. The underlying tone of evil and foreboding is lacking in *The Europeans*. The Baroness Eugenia is potentially a Madame Merle, a Kate Croy, for her motive in coming to America is frankly to make her fortune; but she never actually commits an act of betrayal.

The Europeans is one of the least satisfying of James' short novels. It is a light comedy of manners; this in itself is not by any means to be construed as the reason for the novel's failure. Rather, it is the potential but undeveloped seriousness of the theme which makes the novel unsatisfactory: the international theme is present but never developed fully enough; the theme of betrayal is suggested to the reader by Eugenia's cynical motives in the beginning, but in the end the reader is aware of having been somewhat

misled; the theme of renunciation at the end is not adequately prepared for nor clearly motivated; and the theme of innocence, Gertrude's and Clifford's, is present without the necessary contrasting conflict with evil. Instead, the novel is reminiscent of an Elizabethan comedy of errors in which "all's well that ends well."

The Europeans is "stagey" without being truly dramatic. The dialogue is often epigrammatic without being truly witty, for James lacked the wit of an Oscar Wilde or G. B. Shaw, the kind of wit the situations in this particular novel call for. For example:

"No, they are not gay," Felix admitted. "They are sober; they are even severe. They are of a pensive cast; they take things hard. I think there is something the matter with them; they have some melancholy memory or some depressing expectation. It's not the epicurean treatment. My uncle, Mr. Wentworth, is a tremendously high-toned old fellow; he looks as if he were undergoing martyrdom, not by fire, but by freezing."³³

This passage is epigrammatic, and the last sentence is witty. But the usual Jamesian dialogue is too polished and refined for the situations presented in this novel, particularly in the closing chapters, too polished and refined to draw out the full measure of the comedy. For example, in the final chapter, Mr. Brand, as minister, proposes to perform the marriage ceremony for Gertrude and Felix although he himself had hoped to marry Gertrude. James' attempt at wit here seems flat, artificial.

"I should like, in my ministerial capacity, to unite this young couple."

Gertrude, watching her sister, saw Charlotte flushing intensely, and Mr. Wentworth felt her pressing upon his arm. "Heavenly Powers!" murmured Mr. Wentworth. And it was the nearest approach to profanity he had ever made.

"That is very nice; that is very handsome!" Felix exclaimed.

"I don't understand," said Mr. Wentworth; though it was plain that everyone else did.

"That is very beautiful, Mr. Brand," said Gertrude, emulating Felix.

"As Gertrude says, it's a beautiful idea," said Felix.³⁴

The passage continues in the same vein. The basic situation of the rejected lover urging the father to consent to the marriage of his daughter to the rival is comic, but the dialogue does not carry it off.

This last passage illustrates the main theme of the novel: it is not the international theme as the title would seem to indicate, but rather the New England moral character—its seriousness, its soberness, its propensity for martyrdom and self-sacrifice. Even Gertrude, who is gay, has a strain of seriousness in her, but Felix's continental gaiety is suited to drawing out her charm and quelling her serious moods. Her sister, Charlotte, who is willing to sacrifice her love for Mr. Brand, is the epitome of that martyr trait in the New England character as is Mr. Brand's eagerness at the end to marry off Gertrude and Felix although he loves Gertrude. It is fitting that he and Charlotte should marry at the end. Mr. Wentworth represents that trait of seriousness in the New England character as James portrays it. His soberness and the seriousness with which he takes upon himself the "burden" of head of the family motivate him to the very end. All three, Charlotte, Mr. Wentworth, and Mr. Brand, are satirized by James, and are contrasted with the more worldly-wise Europeans, Eugenia and Felix. Eugenia and Felix are not, however, representative of the best in European tradition and culture. Their motivation in coming to America is to marry into a family with money, and their stereotype notion of American wealth is a barrier to their understanding of the country, just as American distrust (at least Mr. Went-

worth's distrust) of foreign influence is a barrier to the American's understanding of Europeans.

The structure of *The Europeans* is typical in its division into an introductory section, the rising action and development, climax, and the dénouement. It is a four-part pattern in groups of three chapters each, with the climax coming in chapter nine. The climax, however, is neither the moment of revelation nor the highest point of rising action. Rather, it is like the climax in an eighteenth-century novel, Fielding's *Tom Jones* for example, in which the climax is the highest point of plot complication and character entanglement. The final part, like the last act of an Elizabethan romantic comedy, is the unraveling of the complication, the untangling of mixed-up couples by marrying them off in happy and suited pairs.

Both *Confidence* and *The Reverberator* continue James' exploration of the American-in-Europe theme. Though written in a more serious tone than *The Europeans*, *Confidence* has as the basis of its plot a somewhat similar situation involving a mix-up or misunderstanding among lovers which resolves itself into a happy ending. There is in *Confidence* a return to the use of the observer as in *Daisy Miller* and *Madame de Mauves*; however, the observing alternates between Longueville and Wright. The plot situation involves a detached observer, Longueville, who eventually becomes emotionally involved and falls in love with the girl he was to observe dispassionately. The second observer, Gordon Wright, claims for himself only a scientific interest in the girl, Angela; he too becomes emotionally entangled. The plot complication arises when he seeks the supposedly detached (as it really was at the time) opinion of Longueville who judges Angela a flirt. Gordon Wright gives up Angela to marry Blanche Evers; in the meantime Bernard Longueville reverses his opinion of Angela and falls in love with her. Gordon is certain Bernard has be-

trayed him by telling him in strictest *confidence* that Angela is a flirt while believing the opposite so that he (Bernard) can marry Angela himself. As in *The Europeans*, this comedy of errors is straightened out in the final chapter so that Gordon is happy with his wife Blanche, and Bernard and Angela are free to marry.

Though not a major theme as in *The Europeans*, the underlying New England character of the women form part of the background. Thus, Mrs. Vivian, Angela's mother, is described by Longueville:

He learned that she was of old New England stock, but he had not needed this information to perceive that Mrs. Vivian was animated by the genius of Boston. "She has the Boston temperament," he said, using a phrase with which he had become familiar, and which evoked a train of associations. But then he immediately added, that if Mrs. Vivian was a daughter of the Puritans, the Puritan strain in her disposition had been mingled with another element. "It is the Boston temperament sophisticated," he said; "perverted a little—perhaps even corrupted. It is the local east wind with an infusion from climates less tonic." It seemed to him that Mrs. Vivian was a Puritan grown worldly, a Bostonian relaxed; and this impression oddly enough, contributed to his wish to know more of her.³⁵

The theme of a supposed betrayal of confidence (and Longueville plays the role of confidant as well as observer) is taken seriously only by Gordon, and he sees his own folly in the end. However, the general theme of betrayal—usually of a marriage by the husband, as, for example, in *Madame de Mauves* and in *The Portrait of a Lady*—is the major theme of many of James' serious works.

Two techniques are used in *Confidence* that deserve special mention. One is the use of letters to reveal important information to the reader. It is a narrative device used by

an author to gain the directness and speed of exposition without the flatness and author's intrusion that exposition necessitates. This device is by no means an innovation with James; it was used in quite the same way by Jane Austen, for example, in *Pride and Prejudice*, and it is an adaptation of the technique used by Richardson and Smollett in their epistolary novels.

The other technique, and more important one, is stylistic. James makes use of the impressionistic style in the scene in which Bernard Longueville discovers that he is in love with Angela:

The terrace was nearly empty. Every one had gone to listen to the operetta, the sound of whose contemporary gaiety came through the open, hot-looking windows in little thin quavers and catches. The ocean was rumbling just beneath; it made a ruder but richer music. Bernard stood looking at it a moment; then he went down the steps to the beach. The tide was rather low; he walked slowly down to the line of the breaking waves. The sea looked huge and black and simple; everything was vague in the unassisted darkness. Bernard stood there some time; there was nothing but the sound and the sharp fresh smell. Suddenly he put his hand to his heart; it was beating very fast. An immense conviction had come over him—abruptly, then and there—and for a moment he held his breath. It was like a word spoken in the darkness; he held his breath to listen. He was in love with Angela Vivian, and his love was a throbbing passion! He sat down on the stones where he stood—it filled him with a kind of awe.³⁶

This manner of style continues for a few more pages. It has more than a sense of atmosphere, a sense which has been noticed in some of James' earlier works. In this passage we enter directly into Bernard's experience; the atmosphere is an integral part of that experience and mood, but we see and feel it as though it were from Bernard's

point of view. His agitated state and his feeling of awe are the point of view from which we observe the Casino and the ocean. It is his impressions, arising out of his state of being, that we are aware of and which set the mood of the scene. The sounds, the darkness, the sense of isolation although within hearing distance of the gay operetta—all these are subjective impressions. And yet only the impressions are subjective; the scene itself is objectively described by the author who is “looking over the shoulder” of the character, Bernard. We see and feel only what Bernard can see and feel, but we do not get into the mind of Bernard (his thoughts are revealed in an expository manner).

The Reverberator comes at the end of James’ first period of writing. Written in 1888 and published the same year serially in *Macmillan’s Magazine*, the story is not forward-looking in technique, style, or theme. It continues to explore the different traditions and attitudes of Europeans and Americans; specifically, it is about a newly arrived American family living in Paris, who run counter to the expectations of a tradition-bound French family. Like *Confidence*, its theme is a confidence betrayed (in this case an actual betrayal), but though the *reverberations* are serious for the moment, in the end the tables are turned. The crisis of the scandal, which threatened the impending marriage of Francie Dosson and Gaston Probert, is averted by Probert’s assertion of his independence from his family.

In the preface to the New York edition of *The Reverberator* James tells us the situation in the novel was based on an actual anecdote. An anecdote, James relates, “consists, ever, of something that has oddly happened to some one, and the first of its duties is to point directly to the person whom it so distinguishes.”³⁷ But the purpose of relating that anecdote in the form of fiction is to see it in the light

"of a little rounded drama."³⁸ "It is of the essence of the anecdote to get itself told as it can . . . but also it is of the essence of the drama to conform to logic, and the pages I here treat of may appear at moments not quite predominantly sure either of their luck or their law."³⁹

This misgiving on James' part is borne out by the novel itself though in a different sense than he implied. Like *The Europeans*, *The Reverberator* is an unsatisfactory novel. Though a rounded drama, the characters who appear in it are not convincing. A severe critic of James would, of course, find the situation in *The Reverberator* altogether too slight to warrant even a *short* novel, but even an admirer of James must find at times the portrayal of the Dossons and the Proberts too thin. There are times when James' insights into the American and European character are profound and subtle, a delight to the reader both on an intellectual and an emotional plane (although it is the intellectual plane which usually dominates). This is one of the qualities among the early works which distinguish *The Portrait of a Lady*, *Madame de Mauves* and *Daisy Miller* from his lesser works and make them serious works of art. But there are times when James' portrayal of the American character is so thin as to seem superficial. This is never more true than when, as in *The Reverberator*, he portrays the American as a quaint provincial who is out of place in a sophisticated, cosmopolitan society and who uses such provincialisms as "ain't" and "I guess" in his speech.

Thus, the epitome of vulgarity and the main objection of the Probert family to Francie Dosson is that she pronounces the French capital, "Parus." It is true that in the end the French point of view represented by the Probert family does not prevail, but we do not see the Dosson family in any less superficial a light. Mr. Dosson is somewhat of a caricature of an American businessman who knows nothing except how to make money, and even that is left rather

vague. Francie and Delia seem on the whole frivolous, ignorant of the environment around them. And Mr. Flack, the newspaperman, who precipitates the crisis by his betrayal of a confidence, lacks convincing motivation.

However, in the same year, 1888, James published a more significant and convincing portrait of a journalist in *The Aspern Papers*. This short novel, told in the first person by the journalist himself, portrays with complete candor on the part of the narrator, the crassness and duplicity of the snooping journalist who, like Flack, is dedicated to the principle of the profession that all private affairs are public property. What makes the portrait more successful is that the private affair involves the private life of a public person, the famous poet Jeffrey Aspern who died many years ago (we are told by James in the preface that the idea for the story is based on Lord Byron's affair with Jane Clairmont). There lies behind the narrator's quest, however unsavory his methods, a whole tradition of biography that asserts it is the public's right to know everything about a famous author's life.

Thus James enlarges the scope and significance of the theme of *The Reverberator* by linking it with the problem of the artist and his relation to life and to society. Furthermore, there is a dramatic balance of opposing forces. In the beginning it is the narrator's crassness and hypocrisy that establish him as a villain, but his duplicity is more than matched by Juliana Bordereau the owner of the Aspern papers. She shrewdly extracts from him an exorbitant rent for the rooms, calculating his dedication to obtaining the papers without arousing in him the slightest suspicion that he is the one being deceived. The irony of his position reaches its climax when Miss Bordereau, fearing that the journalist might be wavering (he has just refused to agree to six months' rent), dangles before him a prize to bolster his interest, a small portrait of Jeffrey Aspern painted by

her father, and then blatantly offers it for one thousand pounds!

Between these two opposing forces—the modern American journalist to whom the end justifies the means and the old lady to whom the past is alive—is Tina Bordereau, the niece. Tina, like Fleda Vetch of *The Spoils of Poynton*, is caught in the dilemma between her sense of duty to her aunt and her love for the journalist. She wants to do the “great thing,” but she has been used as a pawn in the strategy of both sides (the journalist to get her on his side and the old lady to sacrifice her in order to keep the advantage).

In the end Tina destroys the papers, but not before she has offered herself to the journalist as a sacrifice on the altar of his dedication to obtaining the papers. His refusal of marriage leads directly to her burning the papers, but the act is not vindictive. The destruction of the papers is the final recognition of what her duty is, a duty to do the “right thing.” Perhaps it is this Juliana Bordereau counted on and foresaw before she died; she must have known that the narrator’s singleness of purpose did not include the cost of human sacrifice, for after all was not she, in her singleness of purpose, much like him?

There are, however, redeeming qualities in the narrator. Twice he is given an insight into the horror of his own actions, and each time he recoils from the image it presents of himself. When he enters Miss Bordereau’s sick room, thinking her asleep and too ill to move, to look for the papers, he is caught in the act by Miss Bordereau; being discovered in that manner shocks him as well as the old lady, for he sees to what extent he will go to gain his end. His refusal of marriage is a recognition that his *idée fixe* had hopelessly entangled the emotions of Tina and that he could not delude her further, papers or no papers. Again he recoils from this image of himself as a destroyer

and convinces himself he could "pay the price" by marrying her, but it is too late, she has destroyed the papers. These moments of conscience are genuine, if not lasting, softening some of the harsh lines of the portrait.

As a short novel *The Aspern Papers* looks forward in theme and technique to the short novels of the middle period. Like the spoils of Poynton the Aspern papers (the narrator speaks of the papers as "my spoils") are the focus of the lives of the characters; like the Things in *The Spoils of Poynton* the papers are not specifically revealed, but are made real by their *effect* on the personalities and motivations of the characters. As in the later novel the "spoils" are lost because the heroine chooses to do the right thing, the ethical rather than the selfish thing. And like *The Turn of the Screw* the first person narrative is used to reveal at first hand the horror of evil beneath appearances. In *The Aspern Papers* the guile of the narrator corrupts and then destroys the guileless Tina; in *The Turn of the Screw* the guileless narrator destroys the corrupted Miles in her attempt to save him. The reverberations of the narrator's stratagems in *The Aspern Papers* result in no mere comedy of errors as in *The Reverberator*; they end in the destruction of Tina's self, for the burning of the papers are a symbolic gesture of immolation, which ironically the narrator momentarily sees as a transformation into beauty, for he has convinced himself he "could pay the price" for the papers and marry her.

II

The Middle Period

THE DESIGNATION "middle period" is usually an arbitrary and convenient term used by literary historians to bridge the gap between an author's early or "experimental" stage of development and his late or "mature" period. Many authors, James included, defy such an easy categorizing, for the artistic development of a novelist is often a continuous process from beginning to end, not always a progression toward "maturity," but always a continuity of development. And yet in a special sense James' middle period, from 1890 to 1900, is the middle ground from which looking back we see the foundations on which the present stage of development is based, and looking forward we see the paths of development leading toward the "major phase."

Looking back, we see that it is in the early short novels that the seeds of James' most characteristic techniques, themes, and styles are germinated. The dramatic method and scenic development, the indirect approach, the central observing intelligence, pictorial representation, objectivity and consistency of point of view—all these elements of James' art of the novel are utilized in the early short novels. Longmore and Winterbourne are early examples of

James' use of the central observing intelligence, the most important of his techniques to achieve an objective and consistent point of view. *Daisy Miller* is a balanced composition of pictorial representation, and *An International Episode* utilizes both impressionistic and pictorial scenes. *Washington Square* progresses in a series of short, dramatic scenes, and its style is radically different from the style of *Daisy Miller* or *Madame de Mauves*, indicating that James was capable of a variety of styles in his early period. *Madame de Mauves*, *Daisy Miller*, *Bessie Alden*, and *Catherine Sloper* are each a minor "portrait of a lady" seen from different angles of revelation. The international theme (*Daisy Miller* and *An International Episode*, for example), the theme of renunciation and resignation (*Madame de Mauves*), the theme of betrayal (*Washington Square*), the theme of fate (*Daisy Miller*)—all are to be found in the early short novels where James first evolved them before elaborating on them in the larger scope of the long novel. Symbolism and imagery, a development mainly of the middle period, is first observed in *Daisy Miller*. The neat balance of the two contrasting parts of *Daisy Miller* and *An International Episode* and the roundness of the three-part structure of *Madame de Mauves* are early examples of how James utilized structure to achieve an interfusion of content and form.

Looking forward from the middle ground, we see that there are three major developments in the middle period: 1) the development of the dramatic method; 2) the use of symbolism and imagery as an integral part of content and structure; and 3) the development toward his later style characterized by an involuted, personal idiom. All of these developments had their origins in the early period, but it is in this middle period that James turns his full artistic attention to them.

From 1890 to 1895 James devoted most of his attention

to writing plays. After completing *The Tragic Muse* (1889), James felt he had written his last long novel, and indeed for nearly eight years he had apparently given up writing full-length novels. Though he felt discouraged because of his declining popularity as a novelist, the fact that he devoted all his energies to playwriting during this time made impossible the sustained effort necessary for a major novel. He turned to the new medium convinced he would be more successful as a dramatist than as a novelist. But he failed as a dramatist; the final blow was the failure of the *Guy Domville* (1895) production on the London stage. Although he was unsuccessful as a dramatist, James learned from his experiences as a playwright a greater insight into the dramatic method. He went into drama convinced that it was the true medium of expression for his artistic talents; he came out convinced that the dramatic method was the true means of artistic expression in the novel. And in the novels soon to follow he transferred the method of the dramatist to the novel. He had used the dramatic method earlier, but it was in the novels of the middle period that he developed the techniques of the dramatic method to a fine art.

Although James wrote no major novels during this critical playwriting period, he continued to write in the shorter forms of fiction, especially in the short story. That he continued to write prose fiction while devoting his major efforts to drama is significant because critics who have ignored the short fiction of these years have noted a more sudden change in style and technique than actually occurs. The change is more gradual and continuous than usually supposed, for the stories of this period indicate a continuous line of development which the gap between *The Tragic Muse* and *What Maisie Knew* does not entirely indicate.

Some of James' best short stories were written while he concentrated on the drama rather than the novel: "The

Real Thing" (1890), "The Pupil" (1891), "Owen Wingrave" (1893), "The Middle Years" (1893, revised 1895), and "The Altar of the Dead" (1895) were all written in this period. These stories indicate a development toward James' later art of fiction. For example, "The Pupil" looks forward to *What Maisie Knew* and *The Turn of the Screw* in its subtle and mature handling of youth caught in the complexities of an adult world. Like the governess in *The Turn of the Screw*, Pemberton as narrator of "The Pupil" is the "innocent eye" through whom the atmosphere of evil surrounding Morgan is gradually revealed. Morgan, like Maisie in *What Maisie Knew*, is an "old" youth, made old before his time by his contact with and insight into the evil of the adult world; both are too young to articulate completely adult actions and emotions; and it is the function of Mrs. Wix and Pemberton to articulate for them what they already know instinctively about the evil of indifference in the adult world. And like Miles in *The Turn of the Screw*, Morgan is made cynical by his contact with corruption. It is Morgan's very cynicism which, although it is the true point of view, is discounted at the beginning by the innocent Pemberton who can neither believe that the Moreens could be so evil nor that the youth could be so truthful in his cynicism. It is the subtle use of point of view—a dramatic situation seen from two different and separate points of view, both of which are brought together at the end as being the same point of view—and the subtle handling of the theme of evil which anticipate James' mature works of the middle period. The theme of evil, the evil of indifference, is the same as presented in *Washington Square* as seen in the indifference of Morris Townsend and Doctor Sloper, but the method of presenting it is more indirect and complex.

The style of "The Pupil" is suggestive of James' later manner, but it is "The Middle Years" with its recurrent

imagery of the sea as an underlying motif and "The Altar of the Dead" with its symbol of the altar and its sustained style creating a psychological atmosphere of the past that indicate a development toward compression through the use of imagistic language and symbol and toward involution in dramatic dialogue and narration through the use of subtle nuances and points of view in speech and narrative patterns.

In "The Middle Years" James combines the problem of middle age with one of his favorite themes, art versus life, to be found in many of his stories of this period ("The Real Thing," "The Lesson of the Master," "The Death of the Lion," and "The Figure in the Carpet"). Here the situation in which a middle-aged writer who has reached the height of his artistic powers wishes to extend both his life and his art brings together the two themes. Dencombe's critical physical condition underscores the psychological crisis with which the story begins and ends. The intensity and excitement of experience, the material out of which art is produced, runs counter to any hope of recovery for Dencombe. Unconsciously, or rather instinctively as an artist, he makes his choice in favor of intensity even though he comes to realize in the end that he will have no "second chance" either way; for not only does his choice make physical recovery impossible, but also he realizes that he could not go any further creatively even if he did recover his health. It is the recurring image of the sea that reinforces and intensifies the psychological crisis that Dencombe undergoes; in the opening scene Dencombe sits and stares at the colorless sea "which appeared all surface and twinkle, far shallower than the spirit of man. It was the abyss of human illusion that was the real, the tideless deep."⁴⁰ The fact that Dencombe is at a "health" resort by the sea is an ironic theme in the story. And again in the final scene the image is used indirectly: "His disease was definitely mortal,

of an action as relentless . . . as a leak in a great ship. Sinking steadily . . ."⁴¹ Dencombe is near death. But before death is a moment of insight: "the sense of cold submersion left him—he seemed to float without an effort";⁴² he comes to realize that a "second chance" in art (he has reached his furthest point of achievement) and in life (he is to die) is a delusion, but what he has actually accomplished in both life and art is at least "something." With this realization Dencombe is resigned to his fate.

If Dencombe comes to accept the present by destroying the delusion of the future, Stransom in "The Altar of the Dead" comes to accept the present by creating an illusion of the past. The past evoked is not chronological or historical; it is an inward awareness, a *sense* of the past. Through symbolism and imagistic language a psychological atmosphere is created: the altar, the lighted candles, the recurring images of light and fire are used to suggest the ritual and tradition of commemoration of the dead in a religion. But Stransom is not religious in the orthodox sense: he seeks a ritual (the lighting of the candles) and a symbol (the altar) that will sanctify his dedication to the importance of remembrance of the dead. Stransom, however, is not morbid; he dedicates himself to his task in order to achieve a refined perspective on life itself, and in particular his own life; for the commemorated dead, each lighted candle representing someone he knew who is now dead, are part of his living experience as well as his past. But a flaw in his religion is his failure to light a candle for Acton Hague whom he hated when he was alive. It is through the woman that Stransom meets who also knew Acton Hague and had been hurt by him that Stransom learns forgiveness, learns to give up his egotism.

The theme of the past in "The Altar of the Dead" with its psychological atmosphere anticipates the late fragment of a novel, *The Sense of the Past*. And its sustained atmos-

phere and style, its scenic method, its use of symbolism and recurring images are developments that look forward to the later short novels and major novels. These developments in style, technique, and atmosphere reach their culmination in the two short novels of this period, *The Spoils of Poynton* and *The Turn of the Screw*.

The Spoils of Poynton (1896) is the longest short novel written by James, being over three hundred pages in the London edition, and yet it is in many ways the best example of his mastery of the short-novel form. It illustrates that as he developed in style and technique, James relied less and less on large masses of raw materials for his novels, and more and more on extracting from the framework of a given situation the fullest measure of dramatic and analytic power. He had not succeeded in doing this in *The Reverberator*; the thinness of the material remains apparent, for by expanding it he merely spread it thin over the surface. In *The Spoils of Poynton*, however, the expansion is achieved in *depth* without sacrifice to the linear development of the plot.

The basic plot situation is nothing more than an anecdote overheard by James during a dinner conversation. This "germ of a story" was nothing more than "that a good lady in the north, always well looked on, was at daggers drawn with her only son, ever hitherto exemplary, over the ownership of the valuable furniture of a fine old house just accruing to the young man by his father's death."⁴³ And more than this was not wanted: "There had been but ten words, yet I had recognized in them, as in a flash, all the possibilities of the little drama of my 'Spoils,' which glimmered then and there into life; so that when in the next breath I began to hear of action taken, on the beautiful ground, by our engaged adversaries, tipped each, from

that instant, with the light of the highest distinction, I saw clumsy Life again at her stupid work. For the action taken . . . I had absolutely, and could have, no scrap of use."⁴⁴

In actual life the legal action and its disposition of the spoils had to be the center, the focus of attention. But in the artistic treatment of the situation, the legal battle would have been a false center: "The real centre, as I say, the citadel of the interest, with the fight waged round it, would have been the felt beauty and value of the prize of battle, the Things, always the splendid Things, placed in the middle light, figured and constituted, with each identity made vivid, each character discriminated, and their common consciousness of their great dramatic part established."⁴⁵ However, the Things in themselves would not constitute drama:

. . . character, the question of what my agitated friends should individually, and all intimately and at the core, show themselves, would unmistakably be the key to my modest drama, and would indeed alone make a drama of any sort possible. Yes, it is a story of cabinets and chairs and tables; they formed the bone of contention, but what would merely "become" of them, magnificently passive, seemed to represent a comparatively vulgar issue. The passions, the faculties, the forces their beauty would, like that of antique Helen of Troy, set in motion, was what, as a painter, one had really wanted of them, was the power in them one had from the first appreciated.⁴⁶

Thus, as shown from the preface, James was consciously aware of the artistic problems raised by using the Things as the central focus of his drama. His solution, emphasis on character portrayal and through that a focus on the Things, is what gives *The Spoils of Poynton* its dramatic depth.

The central figure of the drama is Fleda Vetch; on the

success of her portrayal depends the success of the novel. That she does, as James would say, "carry it off," is due in no small measure to James' sense of proportion, that is, of placing Fleda Vetch in a delicately balanced position in relation to the central situation. She is, at the beginning, an "outsider" who has no personal interest or viewpoint at stake in the dispute. However, Fleda is gifted with a fine aesthetic sense. Her reaction against the ugliness of Water-bath and the communication of that reaction to Mrs. Gereth is the beginning of her involvement in the situation. She is invited by Mrs. Gereth to see the beauty of Poynton. Fleda's exquisite aesthetic pleasure in seeing the Things of Poynton is for Mrs. Gereth a discovery of "a community of taste—of passion, of sensibility and suffering"⁴⁷ for both of them. From that point on Fleda is as personally involved in the dispute as the other three characters. Thus, though Fleda Vetch is not the detached observer James often used to establish a controlling point of view, she is the central intelligence of the novel, and her point of view from its middle position interprets the whole. Her viewpoint though a middle one is never stationary, never detached; on the one hand she is in complete sympathy with Mrs. Gereth's viewpoint, but on the other hand she falls in love with Owen Gereth and attempts to be on "his side."

The development of *The Spoils of Poynton* can be best observed in an analysis of the novel because the theme, technique, and structure are closely interwoven and interdependent. Nor need we rely on a subjective analysis, for James thoroughly discusses the development of *The Spoils of Poynton* in his notebooks. It is evident from the notebooks that James had worked out in detail the form and content of the novel long before he wrote it. The entry in the notebooks, dated December 24th, 1893, some three years before he wrote the novel, is as follows:

One can imagine the rebellion, in this case . . . of a particular sort of proud woman—a woman who had *loved* her home, her husband's home and hers (with a knowledge and adoration of artistic beauty, the tastes, the habits of a collector). . . . There would be the particular type and taste of the wife the son would have chosen—a wife out of a Philistine, a tasteless, a hideous house; the kind of house the very walls and furniture of which constitute a kind of *anguish* for such a woman as I suppose the mother to be. . . . I imagine the mother having fixed on a girl after her own heart for the son to marry; a girl with the same exquisite taste that *she* has and having grown up surrounded with lovely things. The son doesn't in the least take to this girl—he perversely and stupidly, from the mother's point of view, takes to a girl infatuated with hideousness.⁴⁸

Here we have, except for the complication of the delayed marriage and Owen and Fleda falling in love with each other, the basic material in a specific form out of which the novel was written.

It is evident from this passage that James would not, had both used the same material, write the kind of novel Balzac would write: in his preface to the New York edition of *The Spoils of Poynton*, James wrote, "They [the possessions] would have to be presented, they would have to be painted—arduous and desperate thought; something would have to be done for them not too ignobly unlike the great array in which Balzac, say, would have marshalled them."⁴⁹ But Balzac would probably have treated the possessions *as* possessions, making Mrs. Gereth's motive one of greed. James desired to instill in the possessions a quality of beauty that Mrs. Gereth's fine sense of taste appreciated and which her son's chosen wife would destroy because she lacked taste. Mrs. Gereth's motive must be aesthetic, not materialistic.

This motive, a feeling for beautiful things, is immediately and strongly established in the first two chapters, which serve as an introduction or prologue to the main situation. The symmetry of the structure is evident in the balance provided by the last two chapters, which serve as an epilogue. The main situation is developed in three parts in equal groupings of six chapters each.

The prologue introduces us to the "community of taste" between Mrs. Gereth and Fleda Vetch in their reaction to the incongruity and ugliness of Waterbath, the home of the Brigstocks:

"Isn't it too dreadful?"

"Horrible—horrible!" cried Mrs. Gereth. . . . Her passion for the exquisite was the cause of this, but it was a passion she considered that she never advertised nor gloried in. . . . She was therefore struck with the acuteness of the little girl who had already put a finger on her hidden spring. What was dreadful now, what was horrible, was the intimate ugliness of Waterbath. . . . It was an ugliness fundamental and systematic, the result of the abnormal nature of the Brigstocks, from whose composition the principle of taste had been extravagantly omitted.⁵⁰

Thus, already in the first few pages of the novel James has established several important relationships and attitudes. First, Fleda Vetch, once she is established from Mrs. Gereth's point of view, becomes the central intelligence of the narrative. Second, because she is a stranger and an outsider, Fleda reinforces and makes plausible Mrs. Gereth's reaction to Waterbath. Third, this sympathetic relationship between Fleda and Mrs. Gereth reinforces and makes plausible the beauty of Poynton, for though Poynton itself is not introduced until the second chapter, its beauty is implied by way of contrast with the ugliness of Waterbath. James does not rely on elaborate and detailed descriptions

of the beauties of Poynton in order to achieve the desired effect; most of his descriptions of the possessions are general rather than specific and detailed. Instead, he makes use of the implied contrast between Waterbath and Poynton. He establishes the point of view that possessions are not merely beautiful or ugly in themselves, but reflect the beauty or ugliness of the lives of the owners of the possessions. Thus, he need not dwell on the objects themselves, but on the attitudes and personalities of the characters in order to make the reader see and feel the beauty or ugliness of possessions. This he does mainly through Fleda Vetch and Mrs. Gereth, through their sensibilities and their sense of taste which are hurt by the dreadfulness of Waterbath and enthralled by the beauty of Poynton.

Fourth, once the relationship between Fleda and Mrs. Gereth begins through their mutual accord in taste, the way is open for Fleda to be involved in the dispute over Poynton by becoming, later, Mrs. Gereth's protégée. And last, the main elements of the plot situation are revealed in chapter two: Poynton is to go to Owen when he marries; Mrs. Gereth's sense of wrong is not that she should be dispossessed (James is careful to make that clear), but that Owen should choose the wrong kind of girl to be his wife; for Mrs. Gereth's successor is to be Mona Brigstock who lacks a sense of taste and would destroy the beauty and perfection of Poynton by her very presence in the house.

By the end of chapter two we are taken to the threshold of Poynton. James avoids describing the house itself in any detail; the style of architecture is described as early Jacobean, but the specific details are left to the reader's imagination. Instead, James describes the *quality* of the house as a perfect object of beauty: ". . . it was a provocation, an inspiration, a matchless canvas for the picture"⁶¹ which the possessions themselves presented. Nor is the house described only as being beautiful in itself, but also

as reflecting the *quality* of the lives of its owners: "Then there had been her husband's sympathy and generosity, his knowledge and love, their perfect accord and beautiful life together, twenty-six years of planning and seeking, a long, sunny harvest of taste and curiosity. Lastly, she never denied, there had been her personal gift, the genius, the passion, the patience of the collector. . . ." ⁵²

Chapter three takes us into the first part of the novel (chapters three through eight) and into Poynton itself. Originally, as can be seen from the notebooks, James intended *The Spoils of Poynton* (then titled tentatively, *The House Beautiful*) as a short story. There were to be three chapters, "like 3 little acts." ⁵³ James kept the main three-part structure, but the material expanded from three chapters to twenty-two, from the original ten thousand words the publisher had called for to the seventy thousand words of the completed manuscript. The dramatic structure is retained to a degree: the three "acts" along with prologue and epilogue are not the clear-cut divisions of a play, but rather natural groupings following the logic of the plot and its development.

In describing the Things, James again avoids the specific, avoids the way Balzac would describe it (as he did in *Old Goriot*). Instead, we are given a general picture, the effect of the whole with just enough detail to suggest the rest:

. . . Poynton was the record of a life. It was written in great syllables of color and form, the tongues of other countries and the hands of rare artists. It was all France and Italy, with their ages composed to rest. For England you looked out of old windows—it was England that was the wide embrace. While outside, on the low terraces, she contradicted gardeners and refined on nature, Mrs. Gereth left her guest to finger fondly the brasses that Louis Quinze might have thumbed, to sit with Venetian velvets just held in a loving

palm, to hang over cases of enamels and pass and repass before cabinets. There were not many pictures—the panels and the stuffs were themselves the picture; and in all the great wainscoted house there was not an inch of pasted paper.⁵⁴

Some might judge from this description that James was not capable of describing the possessions “realistically,” that is, in minute detail. But, first of all, it is evident from other of James’ novels, as for example the description of the old house in *The Europeans*, that James is capable of specific, detailed description. And second, whether or not he could, he *chose* not to. Like Jane Austen, James’ interest and emphasis are concerned with the relationships of characters rather than with a kind of surface realism that describes every object in detail. In his preface to *The Spoils of Poynton*, James has this to say: “The spoils of Poynton were not directly articulate, and though they might have, and constantly did have, wondrous things to say, their message fostered about them a certain hush of cheaper sound—as a consequence of which, in fine, they would have been costly to keep up. In this manner Fleda Vetch, maintainable at less expense . . . marked her place in my foreground at one ingratiating stroke. She planted herself centrally, and the stroke, as I call it, the demonstration after which she couldn’t be gainsaid, was the simple act of letting it be seen she had character.”⁵⁵

Therefore, rather than present the details which would only bog down the narrative and yet not *say* what he wanted said, James concentrated on the *effect*. The effect of the perfection and beauty of the possessions on Fleda Vetch is all-important, and it is that for which James concentrates his creative technique in this chapter. It is important that we *see* and *feel* the beauty of Poynton and the possessions from the point of view of Fleda. For once

Fleda's appreciation of the beauty of Poynton is established, the Things have an articulate and central intelligence through which they can "speak." And furthermore, the *value*, the perfection and beauty, of the Things is thus firmly established so that the conflict between Mrs. Gereth and Mona Brigstock over the possessions is seen in its intended light—a conflict between two ways of life, and not a vulgar family squabble over possessions.

Specifically, the effect of the beautiful things of Poynton on Fleda is immediate and overwhelming: "She perfectly understood how Mrs. Gereth felt—she had understood but meagerly before; and the two women embraced with tears over the tightening of their bond—tears which on the younger one's part were the natural and usual sign of her submission to perfect beauty."⁵⁶ She is immediately drawn into the conflict on Mrs. Gereth's side in understanding sympathy: "To give it all up, to die to it—that thought ached in her breast. She herself could imagine clinging there with a closeness separate from dignity. To have created such a place was to have had dignity enough; when there was a question of defending it the fiercest attitude was the right one."⁵⁷ Mrs. Gereth now has Fleda completely on her side against Mona Brigstock. The reader is no longer dependent on the partisan viewpoint of Mrs. Gereth, for though Fleda agrees with Mrs. Gereth's viewpoint, she herself has nothing to gain by agreeing, has no partisan interest in the conflict.

Mrs. Gereth, however, is not content merely to have Fleda "on her side." When Mona Brigstock comes to Poynton to look it over, to "judge" it, she reacts (or rather, fails to react) just as Mrs. Gereth expected. If Mona does not appreciate the Things as Fleda did, still there is no doubt she will not give them up merely because she fails to see their beauty. As Mrs. Gereth explains to her son, "I could give up everything without a pang, I think, to a person I

could trust, I could respect.'"⁵⁸ To one like Fleda Vetch. And with that, Mrs. Gereth "offers" Fleda to Owen. With that, Fleda is no longer the disinterested observer, but rather a protagonist in the drama. Fleda fits into Mrs. Gereth's plans to save her possessions. And later, Owen is to discover that he has fallen in love with Fleda, just as Mona is to recognize Fleda as the adversary in her fight to hold on to Owen and to Poynton. And yet, Fleda's point of view as the central narrator of the novel is never sacrificed to a false presentation of the conflict colored by her interest in the outcome. It is true we do not see the Brigstocks in the best of possible lights, but mainly through the eyes of Mrs. Gereth and Fleda; yet once the Brigstocks are presented as the very opposite of what Poynton stands for, they can be shown in no other light. Fleda's middle position in the conflict, a position maintained with high principles of conduct and dignity, remains a true point of view. As a fine intelligence she is able to reflect on the situation calmly and justly at the same time that she is the key figure in the drama. It is as though she is the vortex of the storm; a calm point around which the winds whirl, and yet the very center of the storm.

The rest of part one develops and elaborates on the central situation, the struggle between Mrs. Gereth and Mona Brigstock over the spoils of Poynton. James had intended at first to make the marriage of Owen to Mona the climax of part one.⁵⁹ However, the marriage does not actually take place until near the end of the novel. Instead, James made the delay (the date had been set, then postponed indefinitely) part of the struggle over the spoils. Partly, the delay coincides with the impasse between Mrs. Gereth and Mona: Mrs. Gereth has removed all the Things from Poynton and will not give them up; Mona will not marry Owen until all the Things are returned to Poynton, but neither will she give up Owen. The postponed marriage permits James

to introduce a final complication to the situation: Owen's recognition that he loves Fleda, and Fleda's revelation to him that she has loved him all along.

It must be remembered, however, that these developments take place gradually throughout the rest of the novel, excluding the epilogue (chapters twenty-one and twenty-two). Part one ends with Owen's interview with Fleda, asking her to be on his side (which means on Mona's too) and talk his mother into giving up the possessions without the necessity of legal action on his part. Fleda agrees to convince his mother that she should give up the Things. The irony of the situation is poignant at this point: Owen has told Fleda that Mona will not marry him unless the Things are returned to Poynton; to save his marriage he asks the help of Fleda who is in love with him. However, the ethics of the situation are clear to Fleda: she could further her own interests and hopes by *not* convincing Mrs. Gereth, but then she would be betraying the trust Owen has put in her. Furthermore, she is motivated by the belief that Mrs. Gereth did wrong in removing all the possessions from Poynton; they belong at Poynton as part of the beauty she had from the very beginning felt and understood.

The second part (chapters nine through fourteen) develops this complication in the struggle for the spoils of Poynton. Fleda is convinced she must act the "right way": "It would seem intolerably vulgar to her to have 'ousted' the daughter of the Brigstocks; and merely to have abstained even wouldn't assure her that she had been straight. Nothing was really straight but to justify her little pensioned presence by her use; and now, won over as she was to heroism, she could see her use only as some high and delicate deed."⁶⁰ Her heroic deed is performed in two parts. First, when asked directly by Mrs. Gereth, Fleda refuses to reveal that Mona will not marry Owen until the possessions are returned to Poynton, for if Mrs. Gereth knew that

she would never give them up. Fleda had promised to help Owen win over his mother, but also she does not want to gain Owen's love by default. She above all wants to be fair to Mona who, regardless of her way of life, has Owen's promise of marriage. However, this strategy fails because Mrs. Gereth is more certain than ever, every day that the marriage does not take place, that she need only wait it out.

The second part of her heroic deed occurs after Owen, at the climax to part two (chapter fourteen), declares his love for Fleda. Even though she, too, declares her love, she will not accept his offer of marriage unless he is given his complete freedom by Mona (chapter sixteen): "'We must wait!' [Fleda] intensely insisted. 'I don't know what you mean by your freedom; I don't see it, I don't feel it. Where is it yet, where, your freedom?'"⁶¹ And later, she declares, "'Everything must come from Mona, and if it doesn't come we've said entirely too much. You must leave me alone—forever.'"⁶²

Fleda's motivation is perhaps difficult to understand in modern times of hasty engagements quickly broken. Her motivation is purely a high regard for a promise made, Owen's promise to marry Mona. Unless Mona releases Owen from that promise, it remains binding, "forever."

Fleda will not allow herself or Owen to act dishonorably. She is willing to sacrifice her happiness in order to do "the right thing." This unselfish act is an ethical choice based on a code of fine conduct, the same code of conduct that motivated Madame de Mauves, Isabel Archer, and Catherine Sloper.

The full irony of the situation is revealed in chapters seventeen and eighteen. Mrs. Gereth, knowing that Owen and Fleda are in love but not knowing the condition on which Fleda will marry Owen, has acted on her own: "Mrs. Gereth stood there in all the glory of a great stroke. 'I've settled you.' She filled the room, to Fleda's scared vision,

with the glare of her magnificence. 'I've sent everything back.' "63

Naturally Mona will never release Owen from his promise now. Owen understands the condition, his freedom, that Fleda has placed on her acceptance of him; he understands, too, that now Mona will not give him that freedom. The marriage to Mona Brigstock takes place. Mrs. Gereth and Fleda have been defeated; the spoils of Poynton have been won by Mona Brigstock. But Fleda had not throughout the struggle over the spoils, even when she lied to Mrs. Gereth, compromised her principles of right conduct. She lost her chance for happiness, but she retained her dignity and integrity.

The epilogue (chapters twenty-one and twenty-two) is a melodramatic stroke of irony: Poynton burns to the ground while everyone is gone, and all the possessions are lost. Although this final stroke of irony is not as inconsistent and implausible as Baron de Mauves' suicide in *Madame de Mauves*, it is nonetheless disturbing. It adds little to the meaning of the novel; on the contrary it perhaps detracts from the meaning of Fleda's sacrifice since it was, in one way, all for nothing. And the irony of Mrs. Gereth's returning the spoils to Poynton too soon would have been a much more subtle touch of irony to end with than the obviousness of the fire at Poynton. Like the concluding chapter of Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*, the epilogue to *The Spoils of Poynton* is dramatically unnecessary and unsatisfying.

One touch in the epilogue that is dramatically satisfying is Owen's recognition and appreciation of Fleda's sacrifice. It is satisfying not because it is stated, but because of the way it is stated: Fleda is to have "the gem of the collection" at Poynton as her own. Owen writes to her, "Let me feel that I can trust you for this. You won't refuse if you will think a little what it must be that makes me ask." "64

Having rediscovered for himself the value of the Things once they had been removed from Poynton, Owen by this gesture "tells" Fleda that he recognizes the heroism of her conduct.

In retrospect *The Spoils of Poynton* provides to a certain extent an interesting comparison with Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. Both were originally intended as short stories, but in the writing expanded into short novels. The expansion in each case was the result not so much of added plot complications but rather of the emphasis placed on character portrayal and on analyses of motivations and attitudes. Both novels concentrate on four main characters with little or no attention paid to minor characters. Both concentrate on a single line of action with no sub-plot, actual or suggested. Both are constructed on a three-part principle of structure with an introduction and conclusion outside the structural frame (although "The Custom House" introduction to *The Scarlet Letter* is outside the narrative also). Both use symbolism as a method of achieving the desired artistic effect; however, the symbolism in *The Scarlet Letter* is much more extensive and meaningful.

The real difference between *The Spoils of Poynton* and *The Scarlet Letter* is the presentation of the problem of evil in all its aspects in Hawthorne's novel and the surprising lack of this problem in James' novel, surprising in that the situation *potentially* is a problem of good versus evil. It is surprising too because James in many of his works is concerned with the problem of evil as a major theme, just as Hawthorne is, even though James may work from an entirely different premise of what is good and evil. It is true that in *The Spoils of Poynton* James symbolically identifies the beautiful objects of Poynton with the good life and the ugly objects of Waterbath with the bad life, but good and bad are defined aesthetically not morally as *taste* or the lack of it respectively. Mrs. Gereth's

motives are never questioned on a moral basis. Her pride in the material possessions (note Hawthorne's emphasis on the *sin* of pride) and her wanting to hold on to the possessions are not based on an immoral greediness or materialistic pride in the money value of the possessions, but rather on an appreciation of their aesthetic worth and the perfection of life they represent. She is, in fact, willing to give them up if only they will go to someone like Fleda Vetch who will appreciate them as she has. Similarly, though by way of contrast, Mona Brigstock's "ugliness" is her lack of taste rather than lack of moral principles. Her motive in wanting the spoils of Poynton is pragmatic—she knows what she wants and she gets what she wants—Owen has promised to marry her, and Poynton and all its possessions go with him. The "rightness" or "wrongness" of Mrs. Gereth's action in removing all of the possessions is from Mrs. Gereth's point of view an aesthetic problem and from Mona Brigstock's point of view a legalistic one. Owen threatens legal action but will never take it, not merely because it would be against his mother but also because he is able to "see" both sides of the dispute. Fleda Vetch sees the right and wrong on both sides even more clearly, and she acts to save the situation by sacrificing her own interests. Ironically, by doing the right thing, she defeats Mrs. Gereth and herself. The final twist of irony at the end, perhaps included by James because Mona had won out too easily, is that neither side "wins"; the spoils of Poynton are destroyed in the fire.

It is a supposed lack of a clear-cut moral problem—as the basis for Fleda's action that disturbs some critics. But Fleda's heroic deed must be seen as a choice made on the basis of a code of high conduct rather than a pragmatic action which can only be judged after the fact—"what works" is the basis of judgment, and Fleda's action does not work, and therefore was wrong; what was worse from the prag-

matic point of view was that her action not only did not work but it caused her and Mrs. Gereth to suffer. Judged on the basis of the code of high conduct which motivated her, Fleda's action was a right, ethical choice because the intention and motivation were based on an unselfish principle of honor and fairness. The result was disastrous, but the intention heroic. Fleda, however, is not a tragic heroine; James never intended her to be. She herself realizes the irony and pathos of her choice.

If James did not tackle the problem of evil in *The Spoils of Poynton*, he faced it squarely in *The Turn of the Screw*. However, unlike Hawthorne, James was not content to dramatize the problem of sin as a positive and absolute concept. But rather, like Melville, he presents the dramatic conflict of good and evil as an ambiguous but by no means unreal quality of human experience. The ultimate problem, whether evil really and absolutely exists outside of human experience, is left unanswered. Hawthorne in *The Scarlet Letter* accepted the Puritan allegory, but he was a novelist and not a theologian, and therefore he dramatized the consequences of sin as an aspect of human experience. Melville in *Moby-Dick* found the answer to be as inscrutable as the whiteness of the whale. In *Pierre* and *Billy Budd*, returning to evil as a human problem, he finds that evil can exist in the good (Pierre's motive is basically good), and that evil is an irrational principle against which the good is helpless (Claggart's irrational hatred of Billy Budd and Billy's speechlessness when accused by Claggart).

James usually treats of evil as a social aspect of human conduct. Thus, infidelity, betrayal of a trust, lack of taste or a corrupted sense of taste are the social evils which James largely treats of. Pitted against these social evils is the principle of right conduct—the doctrine of renunciation

which renounces immediate happiness or revenge in order to do the unselfish, right thing. However, in *The Turn of the Screw* the problem of good and evil is the central conflict and theme of the drama rather than an aspect of social conduct. But before that can be discussed, the text itself must be examined because the establishment of the point of view and the creation of the atmosphere as well as the development of the main situation is fundamental to any interpretation of the novel and its theme.

It is important that the story itself be examined also because more than any other work by James *The Turn of the Screw* has been the center of a critical controversy. The central critical issue is the point of view: the only point of view is that of the governess who is the narrator throughout (except for the "frame" introduction at the beginning). Edmund Wilson's essay in the *Hound & Horn* (1934) accepts as its premise the theory expounded by Miss Edna Kenton: "The young governess who tells the story is a neurotic case of sex repression, and the ghosts are not real ghosts at all but merely the hallucinations of the governess."⁶⁵ This theory has been denied by other critics, especially by Professor Heilman. However, the Freudian interpretation of *The Turn of the Screw* can never be denied since it is a tautological theory: the governess is psychopathic; therefore her point of view (the only point of view) is distorted and cannot be trusted; therefore we must discover not *what* she has to say but *why*; why because she is sexually repressed; therefore . . . etc. If the Freudian interpretation cannot be denied, it can be ignored as an interesting and even possible (though not probable) theory, reminiscent of the extreme interpretations of Shakespearean plays by Freudian critics, acceptable only if one accepts the Freudian premise to begin with.

Turning our attention to the novel itself, we first observe that it begins with an introductory section (not in-

cluded as a chapter). This introduction is a frame device which serves the purpose of providing the "occasion" for the story and revealing the manuscript which is the record of the events narrated. The manuscript "'is in old, faded ink, and in the most beautiful hand.'" He hung fire again. 'A woman's. She has been dead these twenty years. She sent me the pages in question before she died.'"66

Although considerably shorter and without the Gothic implications (the burning sensation of the scarlet letter emblem) of the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, the introduction to *The Turn of the Screw* is similar in some ways to "The Custom House." Here, as in "The Custom House" the everyday world is contrasted by implication with the extraordinary events to be related: it is Christmas Eve, friends are gathered about the fire in a holiday mood (with the comment that the story is a gruesome one for Christmas Eve), the manuscript is "discovered" (here, simply sent by post from London), the events recorded in the manuscript have taken place some time in the past giving a historical air to the events, thus removing the author from any immediate involvement in the events related.

Further, some outside information is given about the authoress of the manuscript: "'She was a most charming person, but she was ten years older than I. She was my sister's governess,' he quietly said. 'She was the most agreeable woman I've ever known in her position; she would have been worthy of any whatever.'"67 The owner of the manuscript, Douglas, had been in love with the governess, but they never married, perhaps because of what happened to her as recorded in the manuscript.

The basis for the Freudian interpretation of *The Turn of the Screw* is the information in the introduction that the governess fell in love with her employer, the uncle and

guardian of the children. But nowhere is her love described as abnormal. On the contrary, being "the youngest of several daughters of a poor country parson,"⁶⁸ she would naturally be impressed by and infatuated with the handsome, wealthy gentleman, "such a figure as had never risen, save in a dream or an old novel, before a fluttered, anxious girl out of a Hampshire vicarage. . . . He was handsome and bold and pleasant, off-hand and gay and kind. He struck her, inevitably, as gallant and splendid, but what took her most of all and gave her the courage she afterwards showed was that he put the whole thing to her as a kind of favour, an obligation he should gratefully incur."⁶⁹ A Jane Austen personality of romantic sensibility she might be; a Freudian personality of repressed sexuality she could hardly be.

The "germ" for *The Turn of the Screw*, as James tells us in the preface, was revealed to him on a similar occasion described in the introduction to the novel. The host remembered only the scant outlines of a story told to him years ago by a young woman:

The story would have been thrilling could she but have found herself in better possession of it, dealing as it did with a couple of small children in an out-of-the way place, to whom the spirits of certain "bad" servants, dead in the employ of the house, were believed to have appeared with the design of "getting hold" of them. This was all, but there had been more, which my friend's old converser had lost the thread of. . . . He himself could give us but this shadow of a shadow—my own appreciation of which, I need scarcely say, was exactly wrapped up in that thinness.⁷⁰

As with the germ or anecdote for *The Spoils of Poynton* James needed only this suggestion to stimulate his imagination: "The thing had for me the immense merit of allowing the imagination absolute freedom of hand, of inviting it

to act on a perfectly clear field, with no 'outside' control involved, no pattern of the usual or the true or the terrible 'pleasant' . . . to consort with."⁷¹

The notebooks contain a more specific and detailed record of the anecdote used as a basis for *The Turn of the Screw*:

. . . the story of the young children (indefinite number and age) left to the care of servants in an old country-house, through the death, presumably, of parents. The servants, wicked and depraved, corrupt and deprave the children; the children are bad, full of evil, to a sinister degree. The servants *die* . . . and their apparitions, figures, return to haunt the house *and* the children, to whom they seem to beckon, whom they invite and solicit, from across dangerous places, the deep ditch of a sunken fence, etc.—so that the children may destroy themselves, lose themselves, by responding, by getting into their power. So long as the children are kept from them, they are not lost; but they try and try, these evil presences, to get hold of them.⁷²

✓ It is clear from this passage (the only passage in the notebooks concerned with *The Turn of the Screw*) that there is no ambiguity involved: the ghosts are real, and the children are corrupt and evil though still capable of being saved. However, unlike the notes for *The Spoils of Poynton*, James does not give us a step by step account of the development of *The Turn of the Screw*. The above passage, therefore, cannot be taken as the author's interpretation of the completed novel; for that we must go to the novel itself. We can conclude only that James *started* with that interpretation in mind. The story is to be told, James concludes the passage, "by an outside spectator, observer,"⁷³ suggesting that the governess is to be, like Fleda Vetch, a central light reflecting on the events, rather than, as the Freudian interpreters suggest, a false center of illumination.

The preface to *The Turn of the Screw*, Edmund Wilson

to the contrary, gives us a definite clue as to whether the ghosts were real or not: "Recorded and attested 'ghosts' are in other words as little expressive, as little dramatic, above all as little continuous and conscious and responsive, as is consistent with their taking the trouble . . . to appear at all."⁷⁴ That is to say, "good ghosts, speaking by books, make poor subjects, and it was clear that from the first my hovering prowling blighting presences, my pair of abnormal agents, would have to depart altogether from the rules. They would be agents in fact; there would be laid on them the dire duty of causing the situation to reek with the air of Evil. . . . The essence of the matter was the villainy of motive in the evoked predatory creatures; so that the result would be ignoble—by which I mean would be trivial—were this element of evil but feebly or inanely suggested."⁷⁵

In other words, Peter Quint and Miss Jessel are not "stage" ghosts who clank chains and whirl across the stage in white sheets in order to frighten a character and thrill an audience. They are agents who create an atmosphere of evil. It is their evil effect, not their appearance, that is important. It is worthy of note to remember that at the time of conception of *The Turn of the Screw* James was using a similar technique in *The Spoils of Poynton*. The central light was placed not on the Things themselves, but on their *effect* on the lives of the characters. By concentrating on the effect of the beauty of the possessions on the characters, he avoided the pitfall of weak or misplaced specification and yet achieved the desired effect on the reader. Similarly, in *The Turn of the Screw*, James created an intense atmosphere of evil and corruption by concentrating on the effect the ghosts had on the characters, an effect felt by the reader through the sensibilities of the narrator. As James tells us in his preface, his problem was "to make the reader's general vision of evil intense enough . . . and his own experience, his own imagination, his own

sympathy (with the children) and horror (of their false friends) will supply him quite sufficiently with all the particulars. Make him *think* the evil, make him think it for himself, and you are released from weak specifications."⁷⁶ And this James achieves with remarkable success.

How he achieves it can be best seen by observing the development of the novel itself. The narrative proper (exclusive of the frame) begins quietly and objectively. The beginning is realistic; descriptive details and impressions are presented in a realistic tone. For example: "I remember as a most pleasant impression the broad, clear front, its open windows and fresh curtains and the pair of maids looking out; I remember the lawn and the bright flowers and the crunch of my wheels on the gravel and the clustered treetops over which the rooks circled and cawed in the golden sky."⁷⁷

The carefully controlled and tightly knit structure necessary in the short-novel form is evident in these details and impressions at the beginning; no detail is wasted, no impression is without significance. What the first pages achieve is the impression for the reader that the narrator is normal in her attitudes and impressions. The picture we see of the governess is that of a nervous, excitable young woman, alternating between confidence and doubt about her new position. This reaction is normal in one who (we know from the introduction) is new to the work of a governess and who, being of poor parents, would be overwhelmed by the splendor of a gentleman's estate. And finally, the quickness and intensity of her perceptions and impressions have, beyond the measure of her nervousness and excitability, the quality of sensibility characteristic of the fine intelligence James often used as observer. Like Fleda Vetch, the governess and narrator of *The Turn of the Screw* both "sees and feels" with the intensity of a free spirit.

It should be remembered, too, that in the period in which *The Turn of the Screw* was written James was experimenting with techniques, especially with the technical problem of point of view. Both *The Spoils of Poynton* and *What Maisie Knew* were published in book form in 1897, a year before the publication of *The Turn of the Screw*; and *The Awkward Age* was published a year later. The novels of this period have been classified by Joseph Warren Beach (in *The Method of Henry James*) as experimental novels, and Matthiessen (in *Henry James: The Major Phase*) concurs in that judgment. And indeed, in these novels James has turned his full attention to the dramatic technique, to experimenting with differing methods of using the "art of reflection."

Mention has already been made of how in *The Spoils of Poynton* James dramatized the beauty of the possessions by having their value reflected in the personalities of the characters, especially through the central viewpoint of Fleda Vetch. The main technical problem was to establish Fleda Vetch as a valid and sensitive point of view from which the reader could both see and feel the beauty and value of the Things, or else the situation would be reduced to a mere family squabble over possessions however beautiful in themselves. The problem in *What Maisie Knew* is the obverse of that in *The Turn of the Screw*: to portray an adult world through the eyes of a child. From the point of view of Maisie, a sensitive and acute child, we share her innocent wonder at the complicated rules of behavior that govern the lives of adults who love and hate in a context that Maisie at first cannot understand. The gradual development of Maisie from innocence to knowledge is the central light of the novel. To achieve a point of view that is at the same time innocent and full of wonder and yet quick in perception and understanding of the adult world is the main problem of technique in the novel. This James

achieves successfully, but it was necessary for him to use Mrs. Wix as Maisie's confidant and at times interpreter in order to present information about the affairs of adults beyond Maisie's possible knowledge as a child.

The most famous example (though by no means one of his best novels) of James' dramatic technique is *The Awkward Age* which consists almost entirely of dramatic dialogue. And the most famous statement of the technique used in this novel is James' own:

I drew on a sheet of paper [to illustrate the technique] . . . the neat figure of a circle consisting of a number of small rounds disposed at equal distance about a central object. The central object was my situation, my subject in itself, to which the thing would owe its title, and the small rounds represented so many distinct lamps, as I liked to call them, the function of each of which would be to light with all due intensity one of its aspects. . . .

. . . Each of my "lamps" would be the light of a single "social occasion" in the history and intercourse of the characters concerned, and would bring out to the full the latent colour of the scene in question and cause it to illustrate, to the last drop, its bearing on my theme. . . . The beauty of the conception was in this approximation of the respective divisions of my form to the successive Acts of a Play.⁷⁸

This technique is essentially a problem in creating the proper point of view; but instead of one central intelligence, which is James' usual method of handling point of view, there are ten "lamps" or illuminators. Thus, the observer is eliminated, or rather replaced by a particular "lamp" illuminating a particular "occasion." The symmetry of such a technique is perfect in theory, but in practice the ambiguity of point of view presents a difficulty for the reader. For James has eliminated not only the central observer, which the reader of James has come to rely on as an inter-

preter, but also other "signposts" of narrative technique by which an author conventionally guides the reader—such as, a narrative development of incidents, the confidant or the author's "spokesman," irony (which presumes an attitude by the author toward his material and characters), or even the intrusion of the author directly. This factor, combined with the subtleties and ambiguities of James' style, makes *The Awkward Age* a *tour de force* in dramatic technique, a technically exciting experiment with the method of drama applied to the novel, but on the whole an unsuccessful novel (considering the novel as a narrative form).

It can be observed, then, that James was experimenting with methods of presenting point of view at the time of writing *The Turn of the Screw*. The first person narrative recorded in a "manuscript" is by no means an innovation with James, but what is unique is the attempt to fathom a child's world, with all its intermingling of beauty and evil, through the eyes of an adult who is sensitively tuned to that world. James' experiment in using the point of view of the governess was to create an atmosphere, a vision of evil, which she experienced and recorded in all its intensity of fear, dread, and horror.

Yet in the beginning the atmosphere is normal, devoid of sinister suggestion. The governess seems even somewhat disappointed:

I had the view of a castle of romance inhabited by a rosy sprite, such a place as would somehow, for diversion of the young idea, take all colour out of storybooks and fairy-tales. Wasn't it just a storybook over which I had fallen a-doze and a-dream? No; it was a big, ugly, antique, but convenient house. . . .⁷⁹

And even the uneasiness which she sometimes feels is to be attributed to her nervousness about the new position, and not to any premonition of evil.

This appearance of normality provides a deliberate contrast to the intense atmosphere of evil that is gradually built up. The first suggestion of anything "wrong" occurs in the second chapter when it is learned that Miles has been dismissed from school. This in itself is by no means sinister (and were it a different kind of novel, it might be called normal), but the tone of the letter from the headmaster raises doubts as yet unfocussed. No particular reason is given for the dismissal, other than "he's an injury to the others," suggesting that something unmentionable or abnormal on Miles' part might be the real reason for his dismissal. However, this is only the barest suggestion that there might be something wrong with Miles: after all, the headmaster is described as "an awful bore," suggesting he does not understand sensitive children like Miles, or, for that matter, it could be taken merely as James' reluctance to be specific about some details (as for example, Milly's fatal "disease" in *The Wings of the Dove*). The matter is dismissed by Mrs. Grose, the housekeeper, and the governess as being a natural and even healthy form of "naughtiness" in a boy.

The same ambiguity exists surrounding the circumstances of the governess' predecessor who like the present governess was young. She left the house at the end of the year for a holiday, "but our young lady never came back, and at the very moment I was expecting her I heard from the master that she was dead."⁸⁰ And again no reason is given. There is no direct suggestion of evil in her death—"she was not taken ill, so far as appeared, in this house"⁸¹—and yet the unexplained reason for her death creates doubt and foreshadows the atmosphere of evil and corruption; it hints at mystery without any definite basis for it, but which is all too well borne out by later developments.

It is in chapter three that we are suddenly and directly thrust into the presence of evil. "It may be, of course, above

all, that what suddenly broke into this gives the previous time a charm of stillness—that hush in which something gathers or crouches. The change was actually like the spring of a beast.”⁸² The first appearance of Quint’s ghost is seen by the governess. It happens, not in the middle of a thunder storm at midnight, but at the end of the afternoon in the twilight. The apparition presented no overt act of evil, no threat of violence, no sense of horror. The governess’ reaction was one of shock and surprise, doubting her own vision at first and yet knowing the apparition was not of her own imagination. The real vision of evil does not come until later when we become aware, as Professor Heilman suggests, through the governess’ awareness “of a change within the children; the shock of ghostly appearances is the shock of evil perceived unexpectedly, suddenly, after it has secretly made inroads.”⁸³ But the first appearance of Quint’s ghost evokes the immediate reaction in the governess of wonder—who is he? What does he want?

As revealed in the fourth chapter, the governess is not certain that it was a ghost, but that it might be “an insane, an unmentionable relative kept in unsuspected confinement,”⁸⁴ or even that the servants might be playing a trick on her. But with the second appearance of the ghost any such simple explanation seems doubtful. The apparition does not speak, but intuitively the governess understands something of his purpose from watching him: “on the spot there came to me the added shock of a certitude that it was not for me he had come there. He had come for someone else.”⁸⁵ Though this knowledge gives her a moment of courage, its effect is to intensify the growing atmosphere of evil.

The role of Mrs. Grose, though minor, is an important one. The charming housekeeper is portrayed in these early chapters as a sane, common-sensical, down-to-earth sort of person; she is not portrayed as a superstitious person. She

presents a realistic point of view that remains in contact with the everyday world in contrast to the intense awarenesses of the governess, who becomes more and more entangled in the world of evil. Because of this realistic viewpoint, her belief in the existence of the ghosts is important corroborative evidence for both the governess and the reader. Though she never sees the apparitions, she comes to believe in them because, as Professor Heilman suggests, "they are consistent with her own independent experience."⁸⁶

Thus, in chapter four, James twists the situation around so that the governess, standing exactly where the ghost had stood a moment before looking into the room, is seen by Mrs. Grose in precisely the same way the governess had seen the ghost. And Mrs. Grose reacts *as if she had seen a ghost*:

. . . she pulled up short as I had done; I gave her something of the shock I had received. She turned white, and this made me ask myself if I had blanched as much. She stared, in short, and retreated on just *my* lines, and I knew she had then passed out and come round to me and that I should presently meet her. I remained where I was, and while I waited I thought of more things than one. I wondered why *she* should be scared!⁸⁷

And the reader wonders too.

The identity of the apparition is soon revealed (chapter five). From the governess' description, Mrs. Grose identifies him as Peter Quint, the master's valet, who is dead. By implication this information, though negative evidence, corroborates the governess' belief in the real existence of the apparition, for it is significant that Mrs. Grose does not at all question the validity of what the governess saw, knowing as she did that Quint is dead and what the governess saw must therefore be a ghost. Unless we are to believe that the governess as narrator is a false center of revelation

and that whatever she reports is suspect (even to imagining this conversation with Mrs. Grose), we can safely assume that James' intention is to present supporting evidence without giving the whole thing away.

For the important thing is not whether Mrs. Grose sees or does not see the ghosts in order to prove the governess right or wrong about their actual existence. The important thing is the relationship between the governess and the children when it is revealed (chapter six) that the ghosts of Peter Quint and Miss Jessel have come for the children (the governess knows they are not looking for her or Mrs. Grose). Up until now the children have remained mainly in the background, but with this change, or rather understanding on the part of the governess, Flora and Miles become the focus of attention, the center of revelation, always, of course, through the awareness and vision of the governess.

Miles and Flora are the key to the treatment of the problem of evil in this novel. To what extent they have been corrupted or not, to what extent they are corrupt in themselves or innocent is the crux of the problem. Edmund Wilson would have them wholly innocent, corrupted by the governess; this interpretation is based on the Freudian theory already discussed. Professor Heilman sees them as the allegorical embodiment of man's potentiality for good and bad, the ghosts representing evil and corruption, the governess representing duty and the good warring against evil. The two views are mutually exclusive, for one assumes the governess is the villain, the other that she is the protectress. Recent criticism has favored Professor Heilman's view at least in so far as it has tended to refute the Freudian interpretation.

There is considerable support for Professor Heilman's view, but the danger of it is in reducing the characters to allegorical figures and seeing the dramatic action in ele-

mentary allegorical terms. Thus, the novel is seen basically as a kind of morality play: "Miles and Flora become the childhood of the race. They are symbolic children, as the ghosts are symbolic ghosts. Even the names themselves have a representative quality as those of James' characters often do: Miles—the soldier, the archetypal male; Flora—the flower, the essential female. Man and woman are caught even before the first hint of maturity, dissected, and shown to have within them all the seeds—possible of full growth even now—of their own destruction."⁸⁸ The individuality and uniqueness of the experience is lost sight of by emphasizing the allegory. Yvor Winters (perhaps with more justification) analyzes *The Scarlet Letter* in a similar manner, finding it to be the allegory of sin. But in the last analysis any allegorical work of art, to the extent that it is artistic rather than moralistic, goes beyond the allegorical representation in portrayal of character, in narrative technique, and in style. This is certainly true of *The Scarlet Letter*, and even more so of *The Turn of the Screw*.

The theme of innocence-and-evil recurs again and again in James' fiction from the early *nouvelle*, *Daisy Miller*, to the late fragment, *The Ivory Tower*. Innocence is never in James a virtue in itself; it is largely a matter of not being initiated into a particular environment or society rather than of good versus evil. Though innocence is linked with moral good, the innocent are also ignorant of evil and thus are prey to those who would betray them. The innocent like Isabel Archer and Milly Theale are betrayed by those who take advantage of their innocence. The innocent like Daisy Miller betray themselves because they are incautious in their innocence when placed in an evil environment. However, in *The Turn of the Screw*, the theme is treated more fundamentally: innocence and evil coexist; beauty masks corruption; the flower of innocence has within it the seeds of corruption.

It is significant that James chose children as the central actors in this drama of moral evil; the choice intensifies the vision of evil he sought to achieve because of the discrepancy between the traditional Christian myth of the innocence of children (to say nothing of the sentimental values attached to childhood) and their corruption as revealed in the novel. The very language used in describing the children sanctifies them: they are incredibly beautiful and most lovable and good, they are both extraordinarily charming and perfect, they are, in fact, angels. But if these superlatives are suspect in being too good to be true, there is refuge in the nostalgia of childhood that "after all, boys will be boys" and "naughtiness" is a good sign of natural spirits in a boy—as when Miles is dismissed from school.

But we can, in the light of later developments, take Miles' dismissal as an outward sign of his inner corruption. Quint, a year before his death, had charge of the children, especially of Miles. Quint, as an agent of evil, had corrupted them, and now has come back from the dead to claim them. From the governess' and Mrs. Grose's point of view Quint was the corrupter, the instigator of evil; but it must be remembered that they (the governess and Mrs. Grose) are defending the innocence and goodness of the children. Quint is the agent rather than the personification of Evil: the children have a propensity for evil (as well as good); they have within them, as Professor Heilman suggested, all the seeds of their own destruction. Quint draws them out.

One of the basic ironies of the novel is that the governess is placed in the role of protectress, and yet it is to her that the ghost of Peter Quint first appears. Much emphasis throughout the novel is placed on her sense of duty toward the children who are under her protection. The irony is in the suggestion or implication that she, although morally good, unwittingly permits evil to come out in the open—not because of any failure on her part in her duty, but be-

cause of an overdeveloped sense of duty which seeks out the truth. Like Oedipus, the governess pursues the truth, a course that can lead only to destruction. What James dramatically presents is the basic tragic irony that moral good, which values truth, can be destroyed by knowledge of the truth. The governess *must* wrest the truth from Miles, but in so doing causes his death. She is not evil in herself, but her high sense of duty is the very means by which evil claims the life of Miles.

The structure of *The Turn of the Screw* follows the familiar pattern of three-chapter groupings, thus making the novel an eight part structure. However, the divisions are not clear cut in the sense of being complete units, as, say, the acts of a play. Rather, the novel as a whole is a unit of dramatic action, divisible only for purposes of analysis. Each division moves almost imperceptibly into the next in a continuous line of rising action and increasing intensity. There is no dénouement; the novel ends on the highest pitch of dramatic intensity, an intensity which, through atmosphere, characterization, and action, increases as the novel progresses. Because of this, *The Turn of the Screw* is one of James' fastest moving novels, reminiscent of the faster moving early novels which have a larger proportion of outward action than the later novels, and yet it is largely concerned with inward actions and attitudes. It has the full maturity of style, the subtlety of dramatic dialogue, the poetics of language (to even a larger extent) that characterize the late novels. There is no question that with *The Turn of the Screw* James has reached, what Matthiessen calls, the major phase.

The fast pace of the novel is evident from the beginning. In part one not only are all the characters introduced and their important traits portrayed, and the setting, which is an important part of the atmosphere, described, but also the first visit of the ghost of Peter Quint takes place (chap-

ter three). In part two the second and third appearances of the ghost occur. Mrs. Grose identifies him as Peter Quint from the governess' description. The third visit (chapter six) takes place in the presence of Flora; this time it is Miss Jessel who appears.

From this, the governess is sure that the children know and have seen the ghosts (part three, chapter seven). But Miles denies, as Flora does later, any knowledge of the ghosts (chapter eight). Peter Quint appears for the third time (chapter nine), this time boldly inside the house on the stairs. The atmosphere of evil and horror increases in intensity as the governess is aware of Quint's intention. The threat of his appearance is an immediate danger, not a distant vision:

He was absolutely, on this occasion, a living, detestable, dangerous presence . . . the thing was as human and hideous as a real interview: hideous because it *was* human, as human as to have met alone, in the small hours, in a sleeping house, some enemy, some adventurer, some criminal. It was the dead silence of our long gaze at such close quarters that gave the whole horror, huge as it was, its only note of the unnatural.⁸⁹

The inward action, always present, increases as the novel progresses. Each appearance of the ghosts draws us more and more into the mind of the governess—her reactions and reflections; her awareness of danger and of evil that is present. All these, at times presented as intuitions and at times as rational analyses, are part of the intense atmosphere of horror that carries us along rapidly and inevitably to the climax.

The governess confides in Mrs. Grose up to a point but not beyond that point. Her worst fears and her deepest intuitions are revealed to the reader directly rather than to Mrs. Grose. Nonetheless she depends more and more on

Mrs. Grose's support as the children deny any knowledge of the ghosts, and, later, turn against her. Their denials are evidence of their being in the power of Quint and Miss Jessel, not of their own guilt. Thus, confession would save them (and would exonerate the governess).

Mrs. Grose's suggestion of outside help from the uncle is immediately and violently rejected by the governess (part four, chapter twelve). Only she herself, the governess believes, can save them; her employer would only dismiss her if he came, and the children would then be lost. Thus, Miles' declaration that he himself will ask his uncle to come down (part five, chapter fourteen), innocently enough put on the basis that something must be done about his dismissal from school, becomes a crisis for the governess. The real crisis is not so much that the uncle will come—she herself later believes that he must come—but what Miles intends to do if his uncle comes. For she senses that Miles is aware of her fears and will use this threat to gain his freedom from her. The governess, therefore, decides to precipitate the crisis by asking her employer to come down (part six, chapter sixteen). This decision is reached after the second appearance of Miss Jessel (part five, chapter fifteen). The suffering, tortured visage of Miss Jessel convinces the governess that Miss Jessel, suffering the tortures of the damned, wants to share her suffering with Flora.

James, however, does not interrupt the intensity of the narrative nor the unity of the atmospheric effect by introducing an outside force; though the governess has written a letter to the uncle, it is never sent, for Miles has stolen it (chapter twenty-one). It is as though they are destined to work out their own fates within the world of evil that encircles them. It is not only the stolen letter that decides the governess that she alone can save the children. It is Flora turning against her (part seven, chapter twenty).

In the scene at the lake (chapters nineteen and twenty), surpassed in dramatic intensity only by the final scene of the novel, the governess sees Miss Jessel standing on the opposite bank of the lake. But Mrs. Grose does not see:

She looked, even as I did, and gave me, with her deep groan of negation, repulsion, compassion—the mixture with her pity of her relief at her exemption—a sense, touching to me even then, that she would have backed me up if she could. I might well have needed that, for with this hard blow of the proof that her eyes were hopelessly sealed I felt my own situation horribly crumble, I felt—I saw—my livid predecessor press, from her position, on my defeat, and I was conscious more than all, of what I should have from this instant to deal with in the astounding little attitude of Flora.⁹⁰

Though this would seem proof that the governess only imagines seeing the ghost, it is a well-established tradition in ghost-lore that a ghost has the power to appear to one person and not to others. Shaken—she had counted on Mrs. Grose seeing Miss Jessel—the governess realizes how Miss Jessel has triumphed. Mrs. Grose reacts instinctively to the situation in the only way she sees possible:

“She isn’t there, little lady, and nobody’s there—and you never see nothing, my sweet! How can poor Miss Jessel? when poor Miss Jessel’s dead and buried? *We* know, don’t we, love?”—and she appealed, blundering in, to the child. “It’s all a mere mistake and a worry and a joke—and we’ll go home as fast as we can!”⁹¹

Prepared as she is for Mrs. Grose’s reaction, the governess is not prepared for Miss Jessel’s complete triumph. Having Mrs. Grose for the moment on her side, Flora takes up the cue and turns on the governess:

I've said it already—she was literally, she was hideously, hard; she had turned common and almost ugly. "I don't know what you mean. I see nobody. I see nothing. I never *have*. I think you're cruel. I don't like you!" Then, after this deliverance, which might have been that of a vulgarly pert little girl in the street, she hugged Mrs. Grose more closely and buried in her skirts the dreadful little face. In this position she produced an almost furious wail. "Take me away, take me away—oh, take me away from *her!*"⁹²

It is agreed that Mrs. Grose is to take Flora away (chapter twenty-one). Flora is lost, but Miles can yet be saved. Mrs. Grose, though she has not seen, believes in the existence and evil purpose of Quint and Miss Jessel; she believes because she has observed their evil influence on the children. Miles is to stay on with the governess: he must confess if he is to be saved; and if he is saved, then the governess is saved too.

The final part of the novel (chapters twenty-two through twenty-four) moves swiftly to the climax—Miles' confession and death. The confession begins with Miles admitting he stole the letter. The governess, in the role of confessor, is triumphant, momentarily. She does not accuse. She encourages him, presses him, leads him to confess. And, "as if to blight his confession and stay his answer,"⁹³ Peter Quint appears. Miles acknowledges his presence. The governess has triumphed: Miles is saved, Peter Quint has lost. But the experience—the fright, the horror, the recognition of Evil—is too much for Miles:

. . . he uttered the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss, and the grasp with which I recovered him might have been that of catching him in his fall. I caught him, yes, I held him—it may be imagined with what a passion; but at the end of a minute I began to feel what it truly was that I held.

We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped.⁹⁴

The novel ends with this revelation. To have gone beyond that point would have destroyed the unity and intensity of the whole. The whole effect of horror is achieved in that final paragraph. Like Kurtz in Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*, Miles is taken to the edge of the abyss. Like Kurtz's cry—"The horror! The horror!" Miles' cry is a glimpse of naked horror and evil. Like Kurtz, Miles cannot survive the frightful intensity of that experience. They both die with a cry of anguish on their lips—the anguish of the damned, who at the last moment wrest from fate a particle of salvation by recognizing the horror of evil.

No discussion of *The Turn of the Screw* would be complete without reference to its style, and no discussion of its style would be complete without reference to Professor Heilman's essay, "*The Turn of the Screw as Poem*." The essay shows that in *The Turn of the Screw* there is a great deal of recurrent imagery which powerfully influences the tone and the meaning of the story; the story becomes, indeed, a dramatic poem, and to read it properly one must assess the role of the language precisely as one would if public form of the work were poetic."⁹⁵ Recurrent imagery is used by James in a similar way that Hawthorne uses it in *The Scarlet Letter*—symbolically and thematically as well as lyrically. Both make use of a recurrent imagery of light with its suggestion of innocence and beauty in contrast to the evil and ugliness of darkness. However, neither Hawthorne nor James limits the effective use of light imagery to a two-valued contrast between lightness and darkness—good and evil. The respective narratives are thematically more complex than that and demand more than a simple and clear-cut struggle between good forces and evil forces.

Compare, for example, Hawthorne's use:

. . . How strange it seemed to the sad woman, as she watched the growth, and the beauty that became every day more *brilliant*, and the intelligence that threw its *quivering sunshine* over the tiny features of this child! . . . Day after day, she looked fearfully into the child's expanding nature, ever dreading to detect *some dark and wild peculiarity*, that should correspond with the guiltiness to which she owed her being.⁹⁶

with James':

I can still see his wonderful smile, the whites of his beautiful eyes, and the uncovering of his little teeth *shine* to me in the *dusk*. . . . He was gentleness itself, and while I wagged my head at him he stood there more than ever a little fairy prince. It was his *brightness* indeed that gave me a respite. . . . He fairly *glittered in the gloom*. . . . He literally *bloomed* so from this exploit that he could afford *radiantly* to assent. "How otherwise should I have been bad enough?" he asked.⁹⁷

In both passages light is associated with innocence and darkness with evil, but the intent is to show evil-in-good. Thus, in the Hawthorne passage, the "dark peculiarity" is the allegorical equivalent of saying innocence and beauty can be corrupted or tainted; evil or guilt, traditionally in allegory, is evident in physical manifestations as a kind of corruption of original purity. Hawthorne uses this allegorical method extensively in his *Scarlet Letter*. James, on the other hand, as in this passage, uses the contrast for irony and ambiguity so that the effect goes beyond the allegorical level of meaning; the intensity of Miles' beauty and brilliance is in contrast to both the gloom of the dusk and the suggestion of evil in him. James uses this double contrast imagistically as well as allegorically—that is, to *suggest* rather than be the equivalent of corruption and evil,

to present an ambiguity between outward action and inward intention, to show the discrepancy between appearance and reality.

As in *The Spoils of Poynton* beauty and perfection are identified with the good in *The Turn of the Screw*. By recurrent images and repetition James carefully creates "an impression of special beauty in the children, an impression upon which depends the extraordinary effectiveness of the change which takes place in them. In such children the appearance of any imperfection is a shock."⁹⁸ Thus, conversely, ugliness is identified with evil (in *The Spoils of Poynton* it is identified with lack of taste, an aesthetic "evil"). The change in Flora is from beauty and perfection to ugliness and commonness: "' . . . at such times she's not a child: she's an old, old woman.'"⁹⁹ And again: "' . . . she was literally, she was hideously, hard; she had turned common and almost ugly.'"¹⁰⁰ Of course the change is not physical but psychological, and represents from the point of view of the governess the psychological shock of seeing Flora's personality and behavior change so drastically and suddenly.

The setting—the house and its surroundings, the season of autumn, contrasts of day and night—is an integral part of the atmosphere created by James in *The Turn of the Screw*. The old house with its tower, its stairways and dark hallways, is isolated from the outside world. It is not known as a "haunted house," but it has an atmosphere of its own which permeates the whole. It creates a mood of strangeness and an air of expectancy that form a fitting background to the events that take place. This mood is achieved through the use of suggestive descriptions and images.

Similarly, the garden and the lake, scenes of visits by Quint and Miss Jessel, are used as atmosphere. Here the season of autumn, itself suggestive of change, combines with the physical surroundings to set the mood:

The summer had turned, the summer had gone; the autumn dropped upon Bly and had blown out half our lights. The place, with its grey sky and withered garlands, its bared spaces and scattered dead leaves, was like a theatre after the performance—all strewn with crumpled playbills. There were exactly states of the air, conditions of sound and of stillness, unspeakable impressions of the *kind* of ministering moment, the feeling of the medium in which, that June evening out-of-doors, I had had my first sight of Quint. . . .¹⁰¹

Contrasts between night and day, light and darkness, are used also to enhance the mood. Significantly, the first appearance of Quint occurs at twilight with the sunlight still strong enough for clear vision, and the final two appearances of Miss Jessel occur in bright sunlight. The use of daylight rather than the traditional night-time for ghosts, besides supporting the governess in her certainty that her eyes and mind are not playing tricks on her, emphasizes the unnaturalness and boldness of these visits. For example:

Seated at my own table in *clear noonday light* I saw a person whom, without my previous experience, I should have taken at the first blush for some housemaid. . . . *Dark as midnight* in her black dress, her haggard beauty and her unutterable woe, she had looked at me long enough to appear to say that her right to sit at my table was as good as mine to sit at hers. While these instants lasted indeed I had the extraordinary chill of a feeling that it was I who was the intruder. . . . There was nothing in the room the next minute but the *sunshine* and a sense that I must stay.¹⁰²

The seeming naturalness—the sunlight, the domestic setting, the familiarity—is contrasted with the unnatural—the dark appearance, the haggard beauty, the woe—through

the use of light and dark images. All that is familiar and natural is associated with sunshine; all that is deeply tragic and abnormal is associated, by way of contrast, with darkness.

Recurrent images and repeated word patterns are not the only means by which James controls the style of *The Turn of the Screw*. The tone of the narration, an effect of style, is carefully controlled in order to achieve a variety of effects to suit the development of the narrative. On the one hand, the narrator is an observer, a reporter, recording the events as they happen. There is a certain amount of objectivity—particularly in the beginning—in the tone of the governess' observations. Beyond that, and yet part of the tone of objectivity, is the analytical frame of mind that the governess possesses. This analytical process forms a large part of the narrative. To a point it provides suspense; but it goes beyond that point, slowing down the narrative pace. Yet it is essential because of the unique position of the narrator within the narrative—a narrator who, besides being the only observer, as a central character is the interpreter, protectress, and confessor. It is also essential because of the ambiguities present in the narrative, particularly the relation of the children to Quint and Miss Jessel.

On the other hand, the narrator is an emotional, highly excitable, nervous, young woman capable of a feverish pitch of excitement and emotion and of sudden flashes of intuition. This qualifies any tone of objectivity in her narration. And it is this quality which intensifies the emotional and atmospheric tone of the novel. Her relationship with the children, except in those moments when she is being analytical about them, is one of intense emotional reaction. They are most charming and beautiful and perfect in their innocence, and the governess spills over with love for them; they are ugly and hideous in their corruption, and the governess reacts violently with shock at observing this

part of their nature. But, of course, the most intense and emotional moments in the narrative are the various appearances of Quint and Miss Jessel, each more intense and foreboding than the previous, culminating in the scene at the lake and in the final appearance of Quint at the end.

And lastly, the characteristic periodic sentences, besides being suitable to the analytical process of the narrative, are an integral part of the suspense. In themselves periodic sentences do not create suspense in a narrative sense (they are too short to function as a narrative unit); but when combined with other narrative and stylistic elements, periodic sentences help create suspense. This is especially true in *The Turn of the Screw* where suspense functions not only as a narrative element—the delayed but inevitable violent climax—but also as a thematic element—as though with extreme reluctance the vision of evil is fully revealed to us. Nowhere is this more true than in the final scene of the novel where the climax is held off until the final clause:

But he had already jerked straight around, stared, glared again, and seen but the quiet day. With the stroke of the loss I was so proud of he uttered the cry of a creature hurled over an abyss, and the grasp with which I recovered him might have been that of catching him in his fall. I caught him, yes, I held him—it may be imagined with what a passion; but at the end of a minute I began to feel what it truly was that I held. We were alone with the quiet day, and his little heart, dispossessed, had stopped.¹⁰³

III


The Major Phase

THE MAJOR PHASE of James' writing begins in 1901 with the writing of *The Ambassadors*. However, there is no sudden shift in theme or technique, no maturing over-night of style, to mark the major phase. The novels and short novels of the preceding half-decade—from *The Spoils of Poynton* and *What Maisie Knew* to *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Awkward Age*—show a line of continuous development and maturing in theme, technique, and style. What distinguishes this phase from others is the trio of major works that followed one after the other in the years from 1900 to 1904. *The Ambassadors*, *The Wings of the Dove*, and *The Golden Bowl* are major novels in the full sense of being artistic achievements; they are to the latter half of his writing career what *The Portrait of A Lady* is to the early phase, masterpieces which are the crowning works of his life's dedication to the art of the novel.

The artistic success of the three major novels in this last phase of James' writing should not obscure the fact that the artistic ingredients that went into the making of these masterpieces are to be found in the short novels of the preceding and same periods. For example, the symbolism in these major novels is an extension of the method used

in *The Spoils of Poynton* and, more extensively, in *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Beast in the Jungle*. Imagistic language, used in this last period, was developed in the middle period in such stories as "The Middle Years" and "The Altar of the Dead" and reached its culmination in the novel *The Turn of the Screw*. And the style of the novels of the major phase is the end process of a gradual change toward an involuted style that occurred during the middle period.

The dramatic method toward which James' art moved as though toward a magnet was experimented with and developed during the middle period after his attempt at playwriting. Nor is the theme—the failure to accept or recognize a deep experience in life until too late—exclusively of the last period. It is to be found as early as *Daisy Miller* in Winterbourne's discovery, too late, of Daisy's innocence because he had lived too long away from America. Many of James' heroes possess an element of detachment or reluctance to immerse themselves impulsively in emotional actions; like Longmore in *Madame de Mauves* or Longueville in *Confidence*, they are reluctant and are easily rebuffed when they do act (Longmore), or they are frustrated by what might have been (Longueville). Their converse is not Townsend or Densher who are deceivers and betrayers because of their passions; but rather Milly Theale who though young is dying, and who though dying desires only to "live," to experience life to its fullest measure. The theme of *The Ambassadors*—discovering too late that one has missed out on experience in life—is carried to its ultimate in *The Beast in the Jungle*, published in the same year. This theme is taken up again and resolved differently in the late short novel, *The Bench of Desolation*.



In *The Beast in the Jungle* the entire development is

singularly focussed and concentrated to illustrate the main theme, just as John Marcher is singularly dedicated to waiting for the worst of all imaginable things to happen to him. This singleness of action and details gives the compressed unity found in the short-story form. Depth or expansion is achieved by the use of symbolism, and it is this method which lifts the story above the level of an elaborate anecdote. It is the symbol of the beast in the jungle with its ironic implications and the recurrent imagery which give the narrative meaning and significance beyond the level of pure fantasy. A fantasy is what James himself has called *The Beast in the Jungle*; it is a fantasy in somewhat the same sense that James labelled *The Turn of the Screw* a fairy-tale. "The thing was to aim [in *The Turn of the Screw*] at absolute singleness, clearness and roundness, and yet to depend on an imagination working freely, working (call it) with *extravagance*; by which law it wouldn't be amusing except as *controlled*."¹⁰⁴ It is a fantasy in the same sense that some of Hawthorne's short stories are fantasies (for example, "Ethan Brand")—an anecdote or idea is to be illustrated through a narrative with emphasis on psychological or spiritual patterns rather than on surface realism or "true-to-life" representation.

Thus, the *donnée* for *The Beast in the Jungle* as found in James' notebooks parallels the idea of "Ethan Brand" as expressed in Hawthorne's notebooks. The idea as a basis of a story that an investigator searching for the Unpardonable Sin finds it after a life-time of seeking in his own heart and practice is similar to the idea that a man fearing something horrible will happen to him finds it after a life-time of waiting in his own impotence and lack of passion. However, the method of treatment is different in the two stories. One is allegorical, the other symbolic and imagistic; one is moralistic in tone, the other ironic.

The beast in the jungle is the horrible fate awaiting

Marcher: "Something or other lay in wait for him, amid the twists and the turns of the months and the years, like a crouching beast in the jungle."¹⁰⁵ The beast, the thing to happen, lurks in the jungle (of life) ready to spring (to happen) on its prey (John Marcher). This symbol recurs throughout the narrative, sometimes directly as a comparison, sometimes indirectly as a related motif. The direct comparison is the most obvious level of this symbol. For example: "It had always had its incalculable moments of glaring out, quite as with the very eyes of the very Beast. . . ."¹⁰⁶ Or more elaborately:

If he could at any rate have conceived lifting the veil from his image at some moment of the past . . . to talk to people at large of the jungle cleared and confide to them that he now felt it as safe, would have been not only to see them listen as to a goodwife's tale, but really to hear himself tell one. What it presently came to in truth was that poor Marcher waded through his beaten grass, where no life stirred, where no breath sounded, where no evil eye seemed to gleam from a possible lair, very much as if vaguely looking for the Beast, and still more as if missing it!¹⁰⁷

The passage continues in that vein—"where the undergrowth of life," "it would have at all events *sprung*." But what is noteworthy here is the ironic undertone present in the related motif of the wilderness.

The wilderness motif underscores the basic irony of the novel. The main situation—that of a man who waits in fear for something dreadful to happen only to find that his waiting as life passes him by is the dreadful happening—is in itself one of irony. The wilderness motif—that Marcher lives in an uninhabited and desolate wilderness devoid of emotion and passion—reinforces the irony of the situation. It is true that the Beast does "spring," but Marcher does

not exist in a jungle where real dangers lurk. His fear of the Beast is his fear of Life, the dangers of life's passions, emotional entanglements, and experiences.

Marcher's detachment and disinterestedness is emphasized: "He had thought himself, so long as nobody knew, the most disinterested person in the world. . . ." ¹⁰⁸ This detachment is reinforced through imagery, particularly in chapter four in which the fireless fireplace becomes the image of Marcher's passionless life: "He had been standing by the chimney-piece, *fireless* and sparsely adorned." ¹⁰⁹ In itself this passage is merely descriptive; but placed in its context of the particular situation, it becomes imagistic. May Bartram approaches Marcher, saying, "It's never too late." ¹¹⁰ But Marcher fails to understand the words and gesture of her surrender to him: "She only kept him waiting, however; that is, he only waited." ¹¹¹ He understands she has something to give him, but sees it only in terms of an answer to what is to happen to him. The irony is that it has happened in his failure to return her love; he fails to because he lacks the passion to surrender himself in an emotional relationship. He is without the fire of love.

The fire of love or passion is suggestive of the Beast—its glaring eyes, its violence, its swiftness, its lack of fear, recalling to mind Blake's image, "Tiger, Tiger, burning bright." Thus, the final twist of irony is that Marcher is the very opposite of the Beast. This over-civilized, over-sensitive, middle-aged Prufrockian man is too timid to meet life on its terms, too proud to submit to passion and emotion:

No passion had ever touched him, for this was what passion meant; he had survived and maundered and pined, but where had been *his* deep ravage? . . . The sight that had just met his eyes named to him, as in letters of quick flame, something he had utterly, insanely missed, and what

he had missed; made these things a train of fire, made them mark themselves in an anguish of inward throbs. He had seen *outside* of his life, not learned it within, the way a woman was mourned when she had been loved for herself; such was the force of his conviction of the meaning of the stranger's face, which still flared for him like a smoky torch. . . . The fate he had been marked for he had met with a vengeance—he had emptied the cup to the lees; he had been the man of his time, *the* man, to whom nothing on earth was to have happened.¹¹²

Clifton Fadiman, in his edition of the short stories of Henry James, states that a short story can be defined as a story under 20,000 words, and therefore he includes "The Beast in the Jungle." Philip Rahv, in his edition of the short novels of Henry James, states that a short novel can be defined as a narrative over 20,000 words (and under 50,000 words), and therefore he includes *The Beast in the Jungle!* It is obvious from this that length alone cannot predetermine form in prose fiction. We must discover qualitative rather than quantitative differences as criteria of form.

Qualitatively, *The Beast in the Jungle* represents one extreme of the short-novel form, bordering on the short story. In such a case to distinguish between the two forms is analytically difficult if not impossible. Objectively, there is in *The Beast in the Jungle* as in James' short story, "The Madonna of the Future," the same concentration on a single idea and situation, a single line of action to which all the details contribute, a singleness of impression and unity of effect, and comparative brevity. Nor perhaps is it necessary to distinguish categorically between the two forms; the two terms are generic rather than mutually exclusive categories as, in poetry, a sonnet and an ode are. Length is a by-product rather than a criterion of form; qualitative differences in scope and depth of meaning, characterization, sig-

nificant action, and structure are the real criteria of form. Thus, when the length of a short novel approaches the length of a short story, the two forms overlap and become indistinguishable because the limited scope of that short novel is like the limited scope of a short story.


Why then is it possible to call one a short novel and the other a short story, and not both short stories or both short novels? Both are similar in length, both treat of an *idée fixe* because of which the hero is a failure in life, both show the effect of the obsession on the hero throughout the years ending with the revelation of the full horror of the failure. If one keeps in mind that both forms are flexible genres (not inflexible categories) and that in this case there is overlapping, then, I believe, one can distinguish between these two examples of narrative forms on the basis of a qualitative difference in treatment of theme and character. In "The Madonna of the Future" the scope is more limited: much of the space is taken up in necessary narrative development of the external action in order to prepare the reader for the full effect of the ending. The theme of artist-and-life is presented in the form of expository discussions between the artist and the narrator and is subsidiary to the central theme, taking up most of the space not devoted to the main plot development. Thus, its scope is limited largely by the plot; its length by the "time" it takes to tell the story.

In contrast, *The Beast in the Jungle* develops its theme by extending the scope and meaning of its action; the meaning grows out of the situation and action, and each reinforces the other. Symbolism is one means by which the breadth of the narrative is extended, but it is not the only means. Suggestive images increase the implications of the theme and action, create an atmosphere which gives depth to the narrative details, and make the otherwise external attitudes and actions of the characters thematically signifi-

cant. The characters are more fully developed and portrayed not only because of the implications of the symbolism and the imagery, but also because these suggestive techniques release the author from elaborate narrative explanation. Thus, the author can, and does, concentrate on more subtle shades of character portrayal than would be possible in a straight, conventional narrative. It is possible, also, for the author to concentrate on a dramatic or scenic method of development unencumbered by expository detail or "blocks" of narration. The functional relationship between theme and symbol, imagery and characterization, enables the author to explore dramatically the full scope of the scene.

Perhaps this distinction can be more fully understood by examining, by way of contrast, another extreme. *The Sacred Fount* (1901) as a short novel represents the opposite limit at which the short-novel form breaks down. In this case it is not a question of a short novel, because of its greater length, approaching the scope of a full-length novel. *The Sacred Fount* is long, being equal in length to *The Spoils of Poynton*, but whereas *The Spoils of Poynton* is an excellent example of the short-novel form, *The Sacred Fount* borders on the formless. At first sight this may seem paradoxical since it has the elements characteristic of the short-novel form. It has a singleness of idea developed into a single line of action. It has the concentration of time and setting (a weekend party) which though not a necessary element can be utilized as a means of attaining tightness of form and structure. It has a limited number of characters, grouped in contrasting pairs, about which a limited problem or segment of experience is the central or middle light. And yet *The Sacred Fount* tends to be diffuse rather than sharp and clear, static rather than dramatic, thin rather than intensively significant in achieved content.

The main reason for this quality of diffuseness is that James took a simple idea, excellent for a short study, and



elaborated it into a three hundred page novel without much extending its scope or significance. What would have served well for a short story is spread thin in an elaborate but static narrative. The idea for *The Sacred Fount* is, in James' own words, "the notion of the young man who marries an older woman and who has the effect on her of making her younger and still younger, while he himself becomes her age. When he reaches the age that *she* was (on their marriage), she has gone back to the age that *he* was."¹¹³ Stated somewhat flatly, this is the central situation (doubled by its happening to another couple) which is *talked about* (not dramatically presented) in the novel. Essentially, the main idea for *The Spoils of Poynton* is no more complicated or "significant" than for *The Sacred Fount*, but it is in the treatment of it that the two novels differ.

The difference is evident, for example, in the central symbols of the two novels. The sacred fount is the symbol for the source of youth and vitality from which, in a marriage, one partner extracts "new blood" at the other partner's expense. However, the reader is only *told* that this is true, *told* that it has happened; he does not *see* it happen dramatically. Whereas, in *The Spoils of Poynton* the symbol of beauty, the possessions, is dramatically presented; the reader *sees* the effect of the possessions on the lives of the characters, and thus the symbol is significant and real.

The inductive "testing" of the sacred fount theory of human relations is the "plot" of the novel. However, again this is not presented dramatically (or symbolically or allegorically); but instead as an abstract, intellectual problem on which the narrator theorizes and reflects, observes in detachment, talks about to others, and finally draws conclusions about the characters and theory. The narrator is *the* observer; it is as though detached observation and intellectual reflection were to him a profession rather than a vital, emotional experience. Since nothing happens except

that we are told it happens by the narrator, the narrative is static. But the narrator is also static. Other of James' detached observers—Longmore and Winterbourne, for example—experience, learn, change. The narrator of *The Sacred Fount* remains unmoved (except insofar as he becomes emotional about proving his theory). The proof of the theory is the climax of the novel—a problem in logic (and semantics—the narrator and his confidants sometimes have difficulty in finding a common level of semantic understanding) is solved.

Whereas in *The Spoils of Poynton* or *The Beast in the Jungle*, for example, the details enliven and point up the thematic content, in *The Sacred Fount* the details of the narrator's reflections tend to make the theme diffuse. "Reflection," the narrator reflects, "was the real intensity; reflection, as to poor Mrs. Server in particular was an indiscreet opening of doors. She became vivid in the light of the so limited vision of her that I already possessed—try positively as I would not further to extend it."¹¹⁴ James uses the art of reflection in varying degrees in nearly all of his novels; it is as characteristic of his art as his style. But seldom does he use it with as great a degree of abstractness as in *The Sacred Fount*. As Alexander Cowie observes, James "handles the problem with an almost scientific objectivity, and on this account the story loses in humanity as much as it gains in pattern."¹¹⁵ The reading of any novel by James is an intellectual experience to a greater or lesser degree. The reading of *The Sacred Fount* must be for the reader, if it is to be anything at all, an exclusively intellectual experience. The richness and range of human experience and emotion is largely lacking in this novel, and even the intellectual content is made somewhat tedious by the over-elaborate details and ramifications of the narrator's impressions and reflections. The pattern is there, but the material out of which the pattern is woven is thin.

James himself comes to the same conclusion about *The Sacred Fount*: it, he wrote to Howells late in 1902, "is one of several things of mine, in these last years, that have paid the penalty of having been conceived only as the 'short story' that (alone, apparently) I could hope to work off somewhere (which I mainly failed of,) and then grew by a rank force of its own into something of which the idea had, modestly, never been to be a book."¹¹⁶ Clearly seeing the weakness of *The Sacred Fount*, James did not include it in the New York edition of his works.

After the writing of *The Golden Bowl* (1904) there is a falling off in James' literary productivity, and he was never again to complete a major novel. The uncompleted novels, *The Sense of the Past* and *The Ivory Tower*, are the only full-length projects begun in the last decade of his life. The reasons for this relative lack of creative activity, coming after a period of intense creativity, are many and varied. One reason was that the revision of his works for the New York edition was a laborious, time-consuming undertaking rather than a scheme through which to gain financially from past reputation. These revisions were for James a serious artistic project; the revisions satisfied James' sense of perfection, but they also required resetting of the type so that the original plates could not be used. James realized very little money from this edition because the resetting of the type was an expensive process and because the edition itself was limited.

What James did derive from the revision of his works was the artistic satisfaction of a perfectionist, and particularly of a stylist. The revisions of the earlier works for this edition are extensive but not drastic; the revisions are mainly stylistic, giving the New York edition a uniformity of style that does not actually exist between the early and

late works. It was for this reason that the original editions were used in this study rather than the New York edition.

However, it would do well at this point to suggest something of the scope and extent of the revisions by comparing the original and the New York edition versions of a few of the short novels already discussed. It is evident from the texts examined that James made no drastic changes in plot, characterization, or theme. If he felt the novel was too weak in one of the major elements of narrative art, he left it out (as he did *The Sacred Fount*), for the New York edition was a selective rather than definitive edition. The changes made are mainly stylistic. The extent of the stylistic revisions varies from novel to novel, but on the whole the extent is greatest in the early novels. Thus, the revisions of style in *Madame de Mauves* and *The Reverberator* are considerable; in *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Beast in the Jungle*, written only a few years before James began the New York edition project, the revisions are much fewer in number and significance. The reason for this is obviously that these later novels correspond more closely to the style that James had evolved by the time he undertook the revision of his works in 1905.

The revisions found in the New York edition of *Madame de Mauves* range from a change of a single word or two to the recasting of entire sentences. These changes, though extensive, are minor and indicate James' perfectionist attention to details. For example, "you have not" is changed to "you've not" to make the dialogue a little more natural, a little less formal; "though equally young and perhaps even prettier, was dressed more soberly" is changed to "though she was equally young and perhaps even prettier, muslins and laces and feathers were less of a feature" in order to present more concrete details. "It's the miserable story of an American girl, born to be neither a slave nor a toy, marrying a profligate Frenchman, who believes that a woman

must be one or the other. The silliest American woman is too good for the best foreigner, and the poorest of us have moral needs a Frenchman can't appreciate"; for greater clarity this is changed to: "It's the miserable story of an American girl born neither to submit basely nor to rebel crookedly marrying a shining sinful Frenchman who believes a woman must do one or the other of those things. The lightest of *us* have a ballast that they can't imagine, and the poorest a moral imagination that they don't require." These changes are typical and make up the bulk of the revisions in both *Madame de Mauves* and *The Reverberator*. The number and extent of these changes do not lessen for the later *Reverberator*, but then *The Reverberator* is on the whole a weaker novel.

As is evident from these two examples revisions are stylistic; the later *Turn of the Screw* (1898), since it is close in style to the late Jamesian manner, is changed very little, which is even more true of *The Beast in the Jungle* (1903). That James did not make drastic changes in any of the novels included in the New York edition is an ambivalent tribute to his art: on the one hand, *Madame de Mauves* would have been greatly improved by a drastically changed ending, and *The Reverberator* could have been improved in characterization and narrative incidents; but on the other hand, such short novels as *Daisy Miller*, *The Spoils of Poynton*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and *The Beast in the Jungle* are in themselves artistic successes in their original versions so that drastic changes are unnecessary.

Shortly after James had completed the revisions for the New York edition, in 1909, he became seriously ill. He never fully recovered his health and suffered a relapse in 1912. This was one of the main reasons why James' literary productivity was small in the last years. In 1909 he had begun to write *The Ivory Tower*, but the illness interrupted his work on it. In 1910, his brother William died

just a few months after the younger brother, Robertson. James turned to writing memoirs and biography (*Notes of a Son and Brother*). In 1914 James again began writing *The Ivory Tower*, and again he was interrupted, this time by the outbreak of World War I. That such a tragedy could befall the civilization he knew, loved, and wrote about, at first shocked him profoundly. Then he saw that the only choice for him was active support of the English cause. He felt strongly enough about the war to renounce his American citizenship (when America did not enter the war) and to become an English citizen.

It should be evident from these circumstances that the relative lack of creative activity in James' last years was caused by external factors. It was not, it should be emphasized, the result of a drying-up of the creative imagination. Besides the promise of the completed portions of *The Ivory Tower*, some fine shorter pieces were written in this period. *Julia Bride*, first published in *Harper's Monthly Magazine* in 1908, is a short novel which, although hardly a significant or important work, is evidence of James' continued ability to construct a well-rounded and well-balanced narrative. The volume of short pieces, *The Finer Grain* (1910), is uniformly high in quality and contains James' last short *nouvelle*, *The Bench of Desolation*, one of the best examples of his art in this form. And finally, there is *The Outcry* (1911) which provides an interesting epilogue to James' art of the novel—his dramatic method.

Julia Bride is well-written and well-constructed. Though slight in theme and not indicative of any particular growth or development in James' art, it is characterized by a lucid, smoothly rhythmic style and a vigor of tone that gives evidence of continued creative power. The particular quality of its style is achieved by an extensive use of a series of clauses or phrases in a sentence which results in a smooth rhythmic flow and by maintaining the simplicity and rhyth-

mic flavor of speech patterns even in the narrative passages. The two-part structure is reminiscent of the balance achieved in *Daisy Miller* though it is without the contrasting element of the early novel. The main situation—the difficulties of the young daughter of a twice-divorced mother in getting married—is simple in conception and simple in treatment.

Julia Bride, an older but less intuitive and complex Maisie, is caught in the scandal of her mother's divorces. In order to marry a young man of fortune, whose family disapproves of divorce, she must convince the family that her mother was the victim of a cruel husband although the opposite was true. She appeals to the recently divorced husband (her stepfather) to help her by telling the family this lie. Ironically he has come to her with the same plea—the widow he wishes to marry disapproves of divorce, and he must convince her his divorce was not his fault. When in the presence of the widow Julia tells the truth, she loses her own chance. She hopes to salvage her chance by appealing to her former fiancé, only to discover that he wishes to be introduced to the family to advance socially. Julia ends by agreeing to introduce him and by not asking his help.

If *Julia Bride* has been largely ignored by critics (ignored perhaps because it is average, being neither the success nor failure requisite for critical attention), *The Bench of Desolation* has been highly praised. Edmund Wilson judges it to be "one of the most beautifully written and wonderfully developed pieces in the whole range of Henry James' work."¹¹⁷ And R. P. Blackmur, tracing James' treatment of the theme of fate through his later works, finds it expressed in *The Bench of Desolation* "perhaps with the most beautiful lucidity of all."¹¹⁸

The Bench of Desolation is divided into six chapters; however, the structure of this last short *nouvelle* is made

up of four parts. Part one includes the first three chapters, and each following chapter is a structural unit in itself, being a dramatic scene complete in itself. The first part is introductory in the same sense that the first act of a play is often introductory and expository: the characters are introduced, the main situation and conflict established, the mood and tone set. The main situation is outlined in detail in the notebooks:

The man [Herbert Dodd] had engaged himself to a young woman [Kate Cookham], but afterwards had thought better of it and had backed out, to her great indignation and resentment, so that she threatened him *bel et bien* with an action for breach of promise of marriage—and so menacingly, and with such a prospect or presumption of success that he, scared, afraid of the scandal and injury, etc., agreed to “compromise” and pay her two hundred pounds of damages—her own valuation, etc. This he did, but with the effect for years afterward of staggering under the load of the obligations he had contracted to raise the money. His whole life blighted by it, impoverished, etc.—and the years going by.¹¹⁹

“And the years going by”: as with James’ handling of the conflict over the spoils of Poynton, this phrase is indicative of how far James had gotten away from the early influence of Balzac. One need only compare the elaborate and minute descriptions of the external circumstances surrounding the gradual degradation of old Goriot with the telescoped events of the first three chapters of *The Bench of Desolation* to see that James, though influenced by it, was not in the tradition of French realism. Balzac (or Zola) would have minutely traced the poverty, the hardships and privations, the history of the marriage and the death of the wife and children—all this contrasted with the rise of Kate Cookham through frugality and investment, the

rise to the status of "lady." Beyond the necessities of exposition, James only suggests these things descriptively; the ten years during which Dodd marries, has children, loses his bookshop, becomes more and more destitute and lonely (his wife and children die)—those ten years which would be the core of any naturalistic novel—are only hinted at. However, what James does do in this first part is to set the mood and tone of bitterness and desolation.

This mood and tone are achieved in two ways: 1) the point of view, and 2) the language. The point of view is wholly Dodd's; the bitterness is his. Looking over his shoulder and sharing his thoughts, we see and feel the ugliness and sordidness of Kate Cookham's attitude and action: "She had practically [the novel begins], he believed, conveyed the intimation, the horrid, brutal, vulgar menace . . . the ugly, the awful words, ruthlessly formed by her lips, were like the fingers of a hand that she might have thrust into her pocket for extraction of the monstrous object that would serve best for—what should he call it?—a gage of battle."¹²⁰ Here the tone of bitterness is unmistakable; it is presented overtly through the use of such words as horrid, brutal, vulgar, ugly, ruthlessly. It is the language of bitterness; but it is also the language of Herbert Dodd, for we are observing the conflict from his point of view. That view is not the whole view, and therefore the bitterness is not the whole picture. Because Dodd's view is so strongly established in the first part, James' problem of justifying Kate Cookham's action was difficult. What he had to accomplish was to make the reader (and Herbert Dodd) understand that in spite of all Dodd had suffered, she did it *for* him.

"She has kept the money—she has it for him, gives it back to him augmented—she has been keeping it for him till the day when only this will save him. . . . She has taken the money because she has known he would want money badly—later on; and she has kept it although other men have made

up to her for it."¹²¹ The fallacy here is that if she had not demanded the money, he would not have had to mortgage his business and suffer financial destitution, and thus the day when "he would want money badly" would probably not have come. James, in writing *The Bench of Desolation* must have realized the fallacy inherent in the situation and sought to eliminate it by making the motivation more complex. Kate's motivation was not wholly based on the "idea" she had of saving him: "'Put it then that there wasn't much to do—between your finding that you loathed me for another woman, or discovering only, when it came to the point, that you loathed me quite enough for myself.'"¹²² She was not beyond feeling jealous and revengeful even though her suspicions were baseless (as his were of her wanting the money to marry someone else).

Kate's "idea" of saving Dodd suggests an element of fate: "'Of course you've suffered,' she said—'you inevitably had to! We have to,' she went on, 'to do or to be or to get anything.'"¹²³ And Dodd also recognizes this element of fate in his life at the very moment when he seems most free to choose between accepting or not accepting Kate's offer of the money: "It yet somehow affected him at present, this attitude, as a gage of her *knowing too*—knowing, that is, that he wasn't really free, that this was the thinnest of vain parades, the poorest of hollow heroics, that his need, his solitude, his suffered wrong, his exhausted rancour, his foredoomed submission to any shown interest, all hung together too heavy on him to let the weak wings of his pride do more than vaguely tremble."¹²⁴

The symbol of the bench of desolation carries through this suggestion of fate: "The bench of desolation is where you sit still with your fate—that of which you cannot be deprived."¹²⁵ But the bench of desolation is no beast in the jungle; or rather, Herbert Dodd is not John Marcher in the end. There is a strong echo of the theme of *The Beast in*

the Jungle: "Yes, he had come back there to flop, by long custom, upon the bench of desolation as the man in the whole place, precisely, to whom nothing worth more than tuppence could happen."¹²⁶ However, Herbert Dodd is not frightened by, nor does he flee from, human experience, as John Marcher does. The unlighted fireplace that symbolizes Marcher's own coldness of heart could not be applied to Herbert Dodd's sense of desolation and isolation. It is true that it is to the bench that he escapes from the squalid misery of his life and suffering: on the bench "he sat single and scraped bare again, as if his long wave of misfortune had washed him far beyond everything and then conspicuously retreated, was that, thus stranded by tidal action, deposited in the lonely hollow of his fate, he felt even sustaining pride turn to nought and heard no challenge from it when old mystifications, stealing forth in the dusk of the day's work done, scratched at the door of speculation and hung about, through the idle hours, for irritated notice."¹²⁷

The sea-image dominates the imagistic pattern of the novel: the bench itself faces the grey sea, its greyness symbolizing the grey life and world of Herbert Dodd. The isolation of the bench is also the isolation of the sea. As in *The Turn of the Screw* and *The Beast in the Jungle*, the language of *The Bench of Desolation* is poetic: symbols, metaphors, recurrent images, repetitive word patterns are all used to achieve a poetic word-picture of an idea or state of awareness.

It is at this very bench of desolation that Herbert Dodd meets and faces experience. He does not fail as John Marcher does. He does not wait in fear for the beast to spring, for he had learned "the secret dignity of sitting still with one's fate."¹²⁸ And when he meets Kate Cookham there, he does not run away from her in fright and defeat as does Marcher from May Bartram. The bench of desolation becomes "a

bench of triumph as well. The triumph consists for him . . . in the gradual inward mastery of the outward experience, a poetic mastery which makes of the experience conviction."¹²⁹ Not recrimination but resignation, not acceptance of the money but acceptance of life is his triumph. And it is Kate Cookham's triumph too, for she makes him understand; her sacrifices, her dignity, her love balance his misery, suffering, and bitterness.

All this is brought out dramatically in the three scenes—the tableau at the bench of desolation where the two meet, the tea in the sitting-room where Kate Cookham offers the money and herself to Dodd, and finally the bench of desolation again where he accepts her, accepts life when he had every reason to be bitter. These scenes represent what is characteristic and at the same time best in James' dramatic method: the concentration on a few characters (two in this case) within a limited setting, enacting an intensive situation so that every gesture becomes dramatically significant. For example, the tableau in the first of these scenes comes at the exact center of the novel. It is the middle light which illuminates the past and foreshadows what is to come. It is important then that James set the right tone for this first meeting between Kate Cookham and Herbert Dodd. The proper tone is achieved by delaying recognition: Dodd in the role of observer sees an intruder on the bench, but he also observes that she has dignity of appearance, that she is a "‘real’ lady." When he recognizes her, he is shocked but not resentful; he is struck by the wonderful change in her. Her dignity and grace, her somber air dispel any mood of recrimination or bitterness he might feel: "It wasn't thus execration that she revived in him; she made in fact, exhibitively, as he could only have put it, the matter of long ago irrelevant, and these extraordinary minutes of their reconstituted relation—how many? how few?—addressed themselves altogether to new possibili-

ties."¹³⁰ Thus a *rapport* is established that makes possible Kate Cookham's revelation of her "idea" and makes possible, in spite of the past, Dodd's acceptance of her—all this without a word spoken between them.

And at the very end of the novel a repetition of this tableau occurs:

He waited a moment, dropping again on the seat. So, while she still stood, he looked up at her; with the sense somehow that there were too many things and that they were all together, terribly, irresistibly, doubtless blessedly, in her eyes and her whole person; which thus affected him for the moment as more than he could bear. He leaned forward, dropping his elbows to his knees and pressing his head on his hands. So he stayed, saying nothing; only, with the sense of her own sustained, renewed and wonderful action, knowing that an arm had passed round him and that he was held. She was beside him on the bench of desolation.¹³¹

That the acceptance is portrayed by a gesture rather than expressed by a spoken word is characteristic of James' dramatic method. James is most successful when he combines the dramatic method with narrative and stylistic devices to achieve flexibility and complexity and yet retain the objectivity, intensity, and unity of the scenic method. This he achieves in the three scenes in *The Bench of Desolation*. The telescoped narration of the first part enabled him to concentrate on developing the full possibilities of these dramatic scenes. The symbolic and imagistic language and the narrative reflections become an integral part of the dramatic development.

It is interesting to note that about this time (1908-1909) James tried his hand once more at playwriting. One of the

plays written in this period was *The Outcry*, which was later rewritten and published as a novel. *The Outcry* therefore gives us a further insight into James' dramatic method.

The Outcry is not properly a novel, having been first written as a three-act drama in 1909, and then "recast" as a novel and published in 1911. However, a perusal of the text of James' play indicates that the rewriting of the play for publication as a novel consisted largely of filling in narrative details, such as setting, stage directions and characters' movements about the "stage." Yet for this reason, that it so closely follows the technique of the drama, *The Outcry* provides an insight into the dramatic method which James uses as an integral yet flexible part of his artistry in his novels. James himself, in another connection, provides the insight. In the notebooks he discusses the possibilities of his "K. B." idea (an idea for a novel with an American setting—not *The Ivory Tower*—which he had to abandon because of ill health that year, 1909):

The process of the *Outcry* has been of enormous benefit and interest to me in all this connection [the problem of dramatic action]—it has cast so large and rich and vivid a light upon my path: the august light, I mean, of the whole matter of method. I don't in the least see thus—beforehand!—how or why my "K. B." Case, as I may call it for convenience, should *se soustraire* from the application of that method [dramatic method] and not be responsive to that treatment. Its having commended itself to me as peculiarly an action from the moment I began really to look at it is an enormous argument in favour of this possibility—and in fact, truly, would seem to settle the question. Of course I myself see *all* my stuff—I mean see it in each case—as an action; but there are degrees and proportions and *kinds* of plasticity—and everything isn't theatrically . . . workable to what I call the peculiar and special and ideal tune. At the same time one doesn't know—ideally—till one has got into

real close quarters with one's proposition by absolutely ciphering it out, by absolutely putting to the proof and to the test what it will give.¹³²

James, of course, does not use the technique of the drama in his novels to the degree that it is found in *The Outcry*, and James himself recognized that there are degrees and proportions and kinds of plasticity. Nonetheless the essential elements of his dramatic method in the novels are basically the same as those found in *The Outcry*, the difference being in the degree of use and in the flexible relationship between the dramatic and narrative elements. For example, each chapter (or scene) in *The Outcry* is a dramatic unit in the Elizabethan tradition: each chapter "closes" either with the exit of one of the main characters or with the announced arrival of another, and each new chapter "opens" with the arrival of another principal character "on stage." The action is furthered or, as is often the case, new light is shed on past action as different combinations or groups of characters are "on stage" and discuss the action, each according to his lights.

The symmetry of this method is perhaps too formal for the novel form where one comes to expect the flexibility of the narrative method. And James in his novels—even in *The Awkward Age* where this device is used most extensively—does not hold rigidly to the pattern. However, the essence of James' dramatic method is in that very technique: the grouping and re-grouping of characters around a central character or subject within the frame of the scene. These scenic conditions are, in James' own words, "as near an approach to the dramatic as the novel may permit itself and which have this in common with the latter, that they move in the light of *alternation*. This imposes a consistency other than that of the novel at its loosest, and, for one's subject, a different view and a dif-

ferent placing of the centre."¹³³ Consistency and multiplication of aspects are thus achieved. The narrative pace is considerably slowed down as linear action comes nearly to a standstill; but other values are attained—the value of subtler and deeper character delineation, of reflection and observation by a variety of viewpoints, of having “looked in” from all possible angles, of dramatic or organic development within the formal unity of the scene.

Furthermore, the structural division of a drama into acts and scenes has its parallel in the books and chapters of a Jamesian novel. Whether it be the “blocks” of material that make up the books of *The Wings of the Dove* or the Occasions of *The Awkward Age* or the grouping of chapters in *The Spoils of Poynton*, the dramatic structure of James’ novels is a logical consequence of his use of the dramatic method. The three books of the novel *The Outcry* correspond exactly to the three acts of the play *The Outcry*; each successive book is linked with the preceding one by a narrative bridge in lieu of new, visual stage scenery at the beginning of an act. Thus, for example, the ten books or Occasions of *The Awkward Age* approximate successive acts of a play: each occasion or act is devoted to “a single ‘social occasion’ in the history and intercourse of the characters concerned” and a single character (or “lamp”) is the central light of each occasion illuminating the central subject (the awkward age).¹³⁴ Each book, then, is a dramatic unit by itself, but linked to the whole and the other parts by the illumination it sheds on the theme of the awkward age in general and on Nanda’s particular problem. Within each book or occasion and within the limits of that occasion James presents various aspects and viewpoints of the dramatic subject, dividing them into scenes just as the dramatist divides the acts of a play.

Of course *The Awkward Age* is an extreme example of

this method. What it gains in dramatic objectivity it loses in narrative flexibility; the full burden of the meaning and interpretation is on the dialogue. Usually James combines the dramatic method with narration and narrative devices such as the central intelligence and the confidant. The limitations of the dramatic scene are overcome without sacrificing much of its formal value.

Finally, the use of dramatic dialogue is an obvious but important element of James' dramatic method in his art of the novel. The dialogue in *The Awkward Age* is again an extreme use of the technique of the drama since it carries the whole weight of the story's development. However, in all of James' novels the dialogue is more than a gap between narrative passages which some authors seem to use it for. James constantly strove to make his dialogue organic, that is, dialogue which develops the theme, furthers the action, and reveals character (both of the character speaking and of the character being spoken about). To some extent any author worth reading will use dialogue in this manner, but where James differs is in his more extensive reliance on organic dialogue when another author would make use of the faster but less dramatic method of narrative omniscience. The playwright cannot take the audience "behind the scenes"; the actors must act and speak it out. The novelist can take the reader "off stage" through narrative devices and narration. James prefers, usually, to let his characters "act" it out.

James himself stresses the importance of the dramatic method to his art of the novel. He was aware of it early in his career, and its application is to be found in many of his early works before he had turned to playwriting itself. His career as a playwright may have embittered him against audiences and producers, but it convinced him that the dramatic method was his method as a novelist. The plays he wrote did not suddenly reveal to him the "dramatic

way," but the lesson he learned from them encouraged and stimulated him to apply the method of the drama to the novel. Nor did the revelation end there; it developed as his artistic abilities developed until, for him, the dramatic method was synonymous with the art of the novel. For nowhere is he more enthusiastic, more sure of the dramatic method than when, unknown to him his writing career nearly completed, he is engrossed in his plans for writing *The Ivory Tower*:

. . . I come back, I come back yet again and again, to my only seeing it in the dramatic way—as I can only see everything and anything now. . . . I come back, I come back, as I say, I all throbbingly and yearningly and passionately, oh, *mon bon*, come back to this way that is clearly the only one in which I can do anything now, and that will open out to me more and more and that has overwhelming reasons pleading all beautifully in its breast. What really happens is that the closer I get to the problem of the application of it in any particular case, the more I get *into* that application, so the more doubts and torments fall away from me, the more I know where I am, the more everything spreads and shines and draws me on and I'm justified of my logic and my passion.¹³⁵

It was toward a complex and subtle use of symbolism and imagistic language and toward a more mature use of the dramatic method that James' art had evolved. These were to be the means of rendering, of "seeing," *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past*. But James died before he could complete either of these novels. His novels and stories comprise some thirty-five volumes and are a testament to his development as an artist. The fragments and notes for *The Ivory Tower* and *The Sense of the Past* are a testament too, a testament that as an artist he had never stopped developing.

Conclusion

THE SHORT NOVEL as a distinct art form can be said to begin in America with Henry James. Short novels had been written before—witness Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener* and *Benito Cereno*. But with James for the first time in America the short novel was approached consciously as a literary *form*. James brought to the American short novel an awareness of its technical possibilities, a consciousness of its ideal balance between development of idea and economy of execution, and the full measure of his own craftsmanship.

James' short novels, written in every period of his long writing career, reflect the scope and range of his literary development as a novelist. Indeed, his short novels often *are* that development. For example, the technique of the central observing intelligence, an important part of his art of the novel, is first explored and developed in the early short novels. Similarly, the international theme and the themes of betrayal and renunciation are first found in the short novels. The dramatic scene and the dramatic method are first used in the short novels. What is important, however, is not whether James used a particular technique or theme in a short novel or a full-length novel first, but that

these are indications that James was experimenting and developing his art through the short novel and that therefore the full and continuous development of James as a novelist cannot be understood and appreciated without considering that development as reflected in his short novels as well as in the major novels. For example, in the middle of his career, when he turned to drama, James stopped writing long novels; but his development as a novelist did not stop. He continued to write, during that period from about 1890 to 1897, in the shorter forms of fiction, and he continued to develop in technique and style which the gap between the major novels of this period does not indicate. Again, toward the end of his career when, after 1904, all of his major novels that were to be completed had been written, he continued to write short fiction and continued to develop his methods and refine his style, particularly the use of symbolism and the dramatic method and the tendency toward a more personal idiom in style.

James' short novels are uneven in quality, ranging from the weaknesses of *The Sacred Fount*, *The Europeans* and *Confidence* to the excellences of *The Spoils of Poynton*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *The Beast in the Jungle*, and *The Bench of Desolation*. A successful balance between the technique and the content, the form and the idea, was not always achieved; but that was more a fault of execution than a failure of the creative imagination. When the balance was achieved, as it often was, idea, technique and form interacted in a poised tension that is art.

However, the failures as well as the successes are significant for both the writer and the critic. An artistic failure is to a writer as consciously aware of his craftsmanship as James a lesson to be learned; to a critic it is an insight into the limitations of technique, content and form. For example, an interesting fact about the short novel as a distinct literary form is revealed by the contrasting examples

of two of James' short novels, *The Beast in the Jungle* and *The Sacred Fount*, written in the same period.

The short novel stands between the short story and the novel; that middle position is an indication that the short novel derives its values or qualities from both the short story and the novel forms. *The Beast in the Jungle* is a "short" *nouvelle*, bordering on the short story in form; in contrast, *The Sacred Fount* is a "long" *nouvelle*, one of James' longest, but it is not at all close to the long novel in form or scope. The techniques employed and the limitations imposed on the narrative in *The Beast in the Jungle* are closely related to, if not derived entirely from, the short story. This short *nouvelle* is an eminently successful work of art because of the limitations imposed on the idea and the content by the form; expansion is achieved through the techniques of symbolism and imagistic language. On the other hand, in spite of the length, the same rigid limitations are imposed on the narrative material in *The Sacred Fount* without any compensating widening of scope. It derives little from the novel form in breadth of development; it has a structural unity over which the content is spread thin, thus losing some of the value of compactness and economy without gaining a corresponding expansion of its scope. *The Sacred Fount* is an artistic failure because of its over-elaborateness. These two examples seem to suggest that the "shorter" a short novel is the more it needs to resemble or derive its values from the short-story form; the "longer" it is, the more it needs to widen its scope (assuming that the idea is capable of greater scope), and thus resemble or derive more of its values from the novel form while retaining as much as possible the qualities inherent in the short-story form.

Similarly, the limitations of the short-novel form tended to curb James' propensity for over-elaborate analysis and over-refinement of style sometimes found in the long novels.

However, *The Sacred Fount* is not the only exception to this. In *Confidence* and *The Europeans* James does not explore the full potentialities of his material, but instead indulges in a leisurely analysis of the obvious and the trivial. Nowhere is this more true than in *Glasses* (1896), a short novel of about the same length as *Daisy Miller*. The "idea"—the embarrassment caused a young woman who will not wear glasses (it would spoil her beauty) even though she desperately needs them—is nothing more than an anecdote and deserves no more elaborate treatment than the telling of an anecdote. Yet James attempted to expand it into a short novel. The function of the short novel, the development of an idea "on a minor scale," is stretched to the breaking point here. When one considers what James was capable of achieving with approximately the same number of words in, for example, *Daisy Miller*, or when one considers what he was capable of doing with an anecdote as was done with the original idea for *The Spoils of Poynton*, then one can realize that the short-novel form has no value of and by itself. As a form, the short novel has its limitations and its excellences as well as any other form of prose fiction. The development of any literary form is dependent on the writers actually writing in that genre, and the level of that development is dependent on the level of artistic achievement those writers are capable of when writing in that form.

James brought to the Anglo-American tradition of the novel a highly developed sense of technique and form. The notebooks of James are a revealing record of that process by which he evolved the methods of his art through actual practice. "Questions of art," he declares in an early essay, "are questions (in the widest sense) of execution."¹³⁶ His answers—the techniques in relation to the form—to these questions of execution constitute his art of the novel. Objectivity, the central observer, the dramatic method, the

point of view, the development of the idea in relation to the form—these are the specific answers he constantly searched for. And it was in the short-novel form that these answers were explored and developed to a fine art. Stephen Crane's *Maggie* and *The Red Badge of Courage*, Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* and Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence*, all could have been written without James' example in the short novel; but not without more difficulty in surmounting the problem of technique, not without more light to illuminate the problem of form. For James' art of the novel set the pattern for writers like Crane, Conrad and Wharton who were interested in and consciously aware of form and technique in the novel. By his achievement in the art of the short novel, James destroyed the notion that a short novel is either a short story that somehow got out of control or a full-length novel that somehow never was fully developed. He showed, instead, that the short novel is a distinct and valuable form of prose fiction.

Notes

1. Henry James, *The Art of the Novel*, R. P. Blackmur, ed. (New York, 1946), 220.
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, 219.
5. Joseph Warren Beach, "Henry James," in *Cambridge History of American Literature* (New York, 1947), III, 107.
6. Henry James, *Daisy Miller* (New York, 1878), 134.
7. Henry James, *A Passionate Pilgrim and Other Tales* (Boston, 1875), 490.
8. *Ibid.*, 449-450.
9. *Ibid.*, 496.
10. *Ibid.*, 471.
11. *Ibid.*, 478.
12. *Ibid.*, 365.
13. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 268.
14. James, *Daisy Miller*, 4.
15. *Ibid.*, 12.
16. *Ibid.*, 54.
17. *Ibid.*, 23.
18. *Ibid.*, 132. As Daiches suggests, Daisy Miller's death gives the story unity and completeness. Cf. David Daiches, "Sensibility and Technique," *Kenyon Review*, V (Autumn, 1943), 573.
19. *Ibid.*, 56.
20. *Ibid.*, 128.
21. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 268.
22. Philip Rahv in his edition of the short novels of James arbitrarily sets a minimum and maximum limit of word-length at 20,000 and 50,000 words respectively, and is content to let that be his definition of the short novel. From the point of view of an editor seeking a representative selection of James's short novels

- to be included in one volume, it is desirable that a maximum length be imposed or else the volume will not be representative. But from the point of view of a critic, an arbitrary definition of the short novel on the basis of word-length does not give any indication or insight into the short novel as a form.
23. Yvor Winters, *In Defense of Reason* (New York, 1947), 300.
 24. Henry James, *Washington Square* (New York, 1880), 7-8.
 25. *Ibid.*, 9.
 26. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 267.
 27. Henry James, *The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. by F. O. Matthiessen and Kenneth Murdock (New York, 1947), 12.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. *Ibid.*, 12-13.
 30. James, *Washington Square*, 225.
 31. *Ibid.*, 244-245.
 32. *Ibid.*, 263.
 33. Henry James, *The Europeans* (London, 1878), 35.
 34. *Ibid.*, 199.
 35. Henry James, *Confidence* (London, 1886), 55.
 36. *Ibid.*, 148.
 37. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 181.
 38. *Ibid.*, 180.
 39. *Ibid.*, 181.
 40. Henry James, *Terminations* (New York, 1895), 152.
 41. *Ibid.*, 180.
 42. *Ibid.*, 181-182.
 43. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 121.
 44. *Ibid.*
 45. *Ibid.*, 126.
 46. *Ibid.*, 127.
 47. James, *The Notebooks*, 137.
 48. *Ibid.*
 49. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 123-124.
 50. Henry James, *The Spoils of Poynton* (Boston, 1897), 4-5.
 51. *Ibid.*, 13.
 52. *Ibid.*
 53. James, *The Notebooks*, 198.
 54. James, *The Spoils of Poynton*, 24-25.
 55. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 127.
 56. James, *The Spoils of Poynton*, 23.
 57. *Ibid.*, 25.
 58. *Ibid.*, 34.
 59. James, *The Notebooks*, 198.
 60. James, *The Spoils of Poynton*, 127.
 61. *Ibid.*, 228.
 62. *Ibid.*, 231.

63. *Ibid.*, 254.
64. *Ibid.*, 314.
65. Edmund Wilson, "The Ambiguity of Henry James," in F. W. Dupee, *The Question of Henry James* (New York, 1945), 160. Wilson revised the original article for Dupee's book.
66. Henry James, *The Two Magics* (New York, 1898), 6.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*, 10.
69. *Ibid.*, 11.
70. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 170.
71. *Ibid.*
72. James, *The Notebooks*, 178.
73. *Ibid.*, 179.
74. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 174.
75. *Ibid.*, 175.
76. *Ibid.*, 176.
77. James, *The Two Magics*, 17.
78. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 110.
79. James, *The Two Magics*, 23.
80. *Ibid.*, 30-31.
81. *Ibid.*, 30.
82. *Ibid.*, 35-36.
83. Robert B. Heilman, "The Turn of the Screw' as Poem," *University of Kansas City Review*, XIV (Summer, 1948), 278.
84. James, *The Two Magics*, 42.
85. *Ibid.*, 49.
86. Heilman, 277.
87. James, *The Two Magics*, 50-51.
88. Heilman, 280.
89. James, *The Two Magics*, 97-98.
90. *Ibid.*, 173-174.
91. *Ibid.*, 174.
92. *Ibid.*, 174-175.
93. *Ibid.*, 210-211.
94. *Ibid.*, 212-213.
95. Heilman, 278.
96. Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*, Riverside Edition (Boston, 1882), V, 113-114. Italics mine.
97. James, *The Two Magics*, 112-113. Italics mine.
98. Heilman, 279.
99. James, *The Two Magics*, 165.
100. *Ibid.*, 174.
101. *Ibid.*, 123.
102. *Ibid.*, 140-141. Italics mine.
103. *Ibid.*, 212-213.
104. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 172. Italics mine.

105. Henry James, *The Better Sort* (New York, 1903), 204.
106. *Ibid.*, 211.
107. *Ibid.*, 235.
108. *Ibid.*, 203.
109. *Ibid.*, 226. Italics mine.
110. *Ibid.*
111. *Ibid.*
112. *Ibid.*, 242-243.
113. James, *The Notebooks*, 150.
114. Henry James, *The Sacred Fount* (New York, 1901), 90.
115. Alexander Cowie, *The Rise of the American Novel* (New York, 1948), 718.
116. F. O. Matthiessen, *The James Family* (New York, 1947), 513.
117. Wilson, 187.
118. R. P. Blackmur, "In the Country of the Blue," *Kenyon Review*, V (Autumn, 1943), 598.
119. James, *The Notebooks*, 330-331.
120. Henry James, *The Finer Grain* (London, 1910), 231.
121. James, *The Notebooks*, 331.
122. James, *The Finer Grain*, 283.
123. *Ibid.*, 279.
124. *Ibid.*, 296.
125. Blackmur, 598.
126. James, *The Finer Grain*, 262-263.
127. *Ibid.*, 255.
128. *Ibid.*, 257.
129. Blackmur, 298.
130. James, *The Finer Grain*, 262.
131. *Ibid.*, 306-307.
132. James, *The Notebooks*, 346.
133. James, *The Art of the Novel*, 90.
134. *Ibid.*, 110 ff.
135. James, *The Notebooks*, 348.
136. Henry James, *Partial Portraits* (London, 1919), 405.

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